SERMONS

Preached before the

HONOURABLE SOCIETY

OF

LINCOLN's-INN.

BY

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SERMON XIII.

The Evangelical Charity.

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Charity ſuffereth long, and is kind: Charity envieth not: Charity vaunteth not itſelf; is not puffed up; doth not behave itſelf unſeemly.

WHATEVER arguments have been brought againſt the ſeveral outward circumſtances, and relations of facts in the hiſtory of the Chriſtian religion, the force of it's internal evidence could never be denied. It's enemies the

moſt avowed have been obliged to acknowledge that the moral ſpirit and tendency of it's precepts imply a more enlarged benevolence, and a more exalted virtue, than any ſingle adventurer in the regions of philoſophy was ever able to ſtrike out.

It has been allowed, indeed, by a chriſtian writer*, that the collective virtues of the ſeveral philoſophic ſyſtems might make up a body of evangelical morality; but, though this might be true, of what conſequence to mankind in general, were thoſe fragments of moral doctrines that lay ſcattered through a variety of ſects; unembodied for the direction of univerſal practice,

* Lactantius.

and

and unenforced by any ſupreme authority.

Whatever the friends of natural religion may aſſert, mere ſpeculative truths, diſcovered by the human mind, will ſtrike but feebly upon the heart. It is neceſſary as well to believe that the precepts we follow are of divine origin, as to know them accompanied with ſanctions of the higheſt importance.

Upon this foundation ſtand the intereſts of the chriſtian religion. A moſt exalted ſyſtem of morality, formed and embodied by the wiſdom of God, recommends itſelf to our practice, not only by it's own amiable and intrinſic excellence, but by the moſt intereſting ſanctions that can poſſibly appeal to our paſſions or deſires. Our love of life is

flattered with the proſpect of immortality, and our deſire of happineſs is gratified by promiſes of the moſt exalted and invariable felicity.

Motives, however, leſs powerful than theſe, might, one ſhould think, induce us to obey the precepts of a religion that breathes ſo benevolent, ſo delightful a ſpirit!

Were the charity here deſcribed by the Apoſtle, univerſally prevalent, how infinitely greater and more ſecure would be the ſocial happineſs of man!

That diſorder in the commerce of ſociety which ariſes from the too ready indulgence of anger and reſentment, would then be no more; for,

I. Charity ſuffereth long.

In this ſtate of error and frailty, where the beſt of human beings has many faults, has much to be borne with, and much to be forgiven, this diſpoſition of long-ſuffering charity is indiſpenſibly neceſſary for our common peace—Weak and imperfect creatures as we are, ſhall we indulge the peeviſhneſs of haſty cenſure? Shall we give ourſelves up to cruel and precipitate judgments on what, at firſt ſight, bears the appearance of a fault?—Surely, if we are of ſuch a ſpirit, we are deſtitute of that charity, without which the Apoſtle declares, that all other properties ſhall profit us nothing.

The charitable perſon ſuffereth long. The genius and precepts of his religion teach him, what the truth of phi-

loſophy and reaſon likewiſe approve, to bear with the frailties of his fellow-creatures.

He who is haſty to determine upon the conduct and the principles of others, will often form injurious concluſions, and judgments always, at leaſt, uncharitable. Many circumſtances there are which, upon a ſuperficial view, may have the appearance of vice, of impropriety, or of folly; but which, were we made ſufficiently acquainted with the cauſes that produced, or the motives that led to them, we ſhould frequently find to be ſuch as either the weakneſs of human nature could not eaſily avoid, or ſuch as were well and wiſely enough intended, though chance or error rendered the effect obnoxious.

Raſh

Raſh reſentments are equally inconſiſtent with true charity, and with true wiſdom. The firſt recommends a temper that is patient, forgiving, and ſubdued; the laſt adviſes us to preſerve our own quiet, by neglecting the inſults, and enormities of others. The firſt teacheth us to forgive, as we would be forgiven; the laſt ſuggeſteth to us, that, in conſequence of human imperfection, we muſt neceſſarily meet with many diſagreeable circumſtances, and that it would be abſurd to expect from ſuch a creature as man unerring wiſdom, or invariable benevolence.

The author of the book of Eccleſiaſtes ſpoke agreeably to his character of wiſdom, when he ſaid,

" Take no heed unto all words that
" are ſpoken, leſt thou hear thy ſervant
" curſe thee;

" For oftentimes alſo thine own heart
" knoweth that thou thyſelf likewiſe
" haſt curſed others *."

But the eſſential characteriſtic of the chriſtian religion is not only long-ſuffering; for

II. Charity is kind:

That benevolence, that tenderneſs of opinion, that love of human kind ſo

* The Septuagint is more full in this particular: Καιγε εις παντας λογους ους λαλησουσιν ασεβεις μη θης καρδιαν σου ὁπως μη ακουσης του δουλου σου καταρωμενου σε ὁτι πλειςακις πονηρευσεται σε, καθοδους πολλας κακωσει καρδιαν σου, ὁτι ὡς καιγε συ κατηρασω ἑτερους.

warmly

warmly recommended by the author of our religion, and ſo viſible in all his precepts, render him, while reſpectable as the legiſlator, amiable as the friend of our ſpecies.

The lawgiver, who conſults only the happineſs of the people, who, in every edict, is apparently influenced by motives that make for the univerſal welfare, is generally and juſtly adored.

Such is the founder of the Chriſtian diſpenſation —— In all his doctrines, and in all his precepts, you ſee that kindneſs ſo peculiar to his own character, and ſo repeatedly recommended to all his followers—To love one another, to love as brethren, to be kindly affectioned one to another, are precepts univerſally

verſally enforced by all the evangelical and apoſtolical writers.

By that wiſdom which erreth not they were taught to know that this ſocial affection was the ſureſt foundation of moral goodneſs—that *love worketh no ill to his neighbour*, and that, therefore, *love is the fulfilling of the law*.

So neceſſary is this mutual kindneſs to the well being of ſociety, and the happineſs of human life, ſo expedient that benevolence which binds and endears us to each other, that no ſyſtem of religion, which ſhould not enjoin, no charity, that ſhould not comprehend it, would be ſuited to the wants of the community, or adapted to the attainable excellence of our nature.

The

The greateſt and the beſt part of our temporal happineſs is founded on that friendly and agreeable intercourſe we have one with another. Without kindneſs this intercourſe cannot ſubſiſt, or ſhould it be kept up by commercial intereſts, the heart would derive no ſincere or valuable ſatisfaction from it, when neither dignified by friendſhip, nor endeared by affection.

This diſpoſition of kindneſs will ſave us from many painful and criminal paſſions, which the depravity of human nature is too apt to cheriſh. We can neither rejoice over the misfortunes of thoſe we love, nor repine at their ſucceſs.

III. Charity envieth not.

A Chriſtian, whoſe hopes lay hold on the felicity of heaven, and the rewards of immortality, can never poſſibly be ſenſible of envy, becauſe thoſe diſtinctions and poſſeſſions which uſually excite that ſenſation, with *him* can have no merit. The heart whoſe affections are placed on things above, is privileged from all the vexations that attend this guilty paſſion. The human mind has always one principal object, to which it's attention is turned, and on which it's hopes are fixed. Whatever interferes with theſe hopes will create uneaſineſs, and, if competition is in the caſe, there will be envy alſo. But a man can have no competitor for the favour of God, whoſe ſucceſs can poſſibly be prejudicial to him, therefore he who ſeeks an intereſt only in the counſels

of Providence, reſts free from envy upon thoſe principles.

Inferior conſiderations, and temporal intereſts, though they may require his attention, will never obtain ſuch an influence over his heart as to make him envious or diſſatisfied when he beholds others more ſucceſsful in the purſuit. He moves forward with a calm and indifferent tranquillity, while he ſees many ſtrain before him to the goal of worldly diſtinctions and preferments. He is neither *envious* at the ſucceſs of evil doers; nor is his heart a ſtranger to gladneſs during the time that *their corn and their wine increaſeth.*

Yet it is not only becauſe of uninterfering intereſts that the charitable man cannot

cannot envy. He is exempt from ſuch ſentiments upon nobler principles.

Tender and benevolent in all his diſpoſitions, he has no wiſh but for the general happineſs of his fellow-creatures, and in beholding that happineſs, he finds his own. Agreeably to the principles and the practice of his divine maſter, he is ready to *rejoice with them that do rejoice*, and to *weep with them that weep*; far and happily different from the temper of envy, which weeps with them that rejoice, and rejoiceth with them that weep.

How gracious is that eternal Providence which thus, in every diſpenſation, conſults the benefit of mankind!—How kind that heavenly wiſdom which inſti-

tuted a religion, that, by rectifying the heart, gives it a higher capacity of happineſs; and by cheriſhing the ſocial and benevolent affections, would baniſh that evil out of the world, which is inſeparable from the indulgence of contrary diſpoſitions.

What a miſerable ſenſation muſt envy be! and how deſtitute even of the common meaſure of happineſs muſt be thoſe wretched minds that entertain it!—A benevolent man makes the moſt of human enjoyments; and not a little increaſes that portion of felicity which falls to his own ſhare, by partaking of and rejoicing in the welfare of others: But the ſpirit of envy converts thoſe very circumſtances to miſery, from which benevolence bringeth forth joy.

Thrice

Thrice happy that gentle and charitable diſpoſition, which ſo far from being pained by the apparent ſuperiority of others, would, in tenderneſs be unwilling to give others pain by aſſuming a ſuperiority itſelf.

IV. Charity vaunteth not itſelf, is not puffed up.

Humility is inſeparable from that genuine piety, that chriſtian benevolence and meekneſs, of which the charity we are here deſcribing is altogether comprehenſive.

The ſubdued ſpirit and the humble ſentiment are unavoidably adopted and derived from the temper and character of the author of Chriſtianity—They who

learn

learn of him, muſt be *meek and lowly*; and, moreover, in ſuch a temper they will infallibly find that *reſt* which he hath promiſed.

There is ſcarce any ſenſation that brings more pain along with it than that of pride. However apt we are to indulge it in ourſelves, we always take a pleaſure in mortifying it in others, and if we likewiſe entertain ſo troubleſome a gueſt, we ſeldom fail of being mortified in our turn.

But the humble mind is never expoſed to any troubles of this kind, and this is another degree of happineſs peculiar to that evangelical charity which *vaunteth not itſelf, is not puffed up.*

From what motives, or upon what principles this chriſtian love or charity is always accompanied by humility, it is not difficult to diſcover.

Love and pride are always incompatible. The one gives the preference and eſteem to it's object; the other aſſumes them both itſelf: The one is a ſocial affection extended to others; the other is a ſelfiſh paſſion that centers in it's own being. Chriſtian charity comprehends in its ſcheme of benevolence all human kind, and being *kindly affectioned in brotherly love, in honour preferreth* others. In ſuch a ſyſtem there is no place for pride: becauſe there is no object over which it might exalt itſelf.

Humility

Humility is a friend to decency and order, to a regular and becoming deportment in every ſtation of life. And thus it is that

V. Charity doth not behave itſelf unſeemly.

Upon an unwillingneſs to give offence no doubt it is that the Apoſtle founds this characteriſtic of charity.

And, indeed, this is ſo amiable, and, for the commerce of ſociety, ſo neceſſary a quality, that the ſyſtem of chriſtian virtues would have been very incomplete without it.

Little and ungenerous minds there are that take a low-thoughted pleaſure in

doing and ſaying offenſive and unbecoming things—Theſe evidently want that enlarged and benevolent ſpirit which is inſpired by the genius, or formed upon the precepts of Chriſtianity.

It was partly upon this principle that St. Paul became all things to all men; to render himſelf agreeable to them he admitted nothing in his own conduct offenſive or unſeemly; and this he did, as well in compliance with the ſpirit of his religion, as that by this agreeable temper, and conformity of manners, he might, *by all means, gain ſome of them.*

SERMON XIV.

The Evangelical Charity.

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1 Cor. xiii. 5, 6.

Charity *ſeeketh not her own; is not eaſily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.*

HOW excellent is the ſpirit of that religion which enlarges and exalts the mind; that teaches the ſocial affections to expand; and, baniſhing all that is ſordid or ſelfiſh from the heart, inſpires it with the moſt diffuſive benevo-

lence, and the moſt unbounded love of human kind.

Such is the religion of a Chriſtian. In the firſt dawn of it's publication, it's profeſſors were diſtinguiſhed by a degree of moral excellence which philoſophy had contemplated, but had never practiſed.

Who can read without admiration, without catching ſomething of a divine enthuſiaſm, the account which the writer of the *Acts* has given us of the firſt little united band of Chriſtians?

" All that believed, ſays he, were " together, and had all things com- " mon.

" And

" And ſold their poſſeſſions and
" goods, and parted them to all men,
" as every man had need.

" And they continuing daily with
" one accord in the temple, and break-
" ing bread from houſe to houſe, did
" eat their meat with GLADNESS and
" SINGLENESS OF HEART.

" Praiſing God, and having favour
" with all the people."

However ſimple this narrative may appear, it exhibits a moſt lively picture of THE EVANGELICAL CHARITY, in it's various effects.

All that believed were together. It was natural for a newly eſtabliſhed ſect to

aſſociate, but the union of the Chriſtians was rendered dear and indiſſoluble by that *charity* which was originally inſpired from above.

By the precepts of their divine maſter the diſciples had been taught to unite in affection, to love and to ſerve one another; but from the influences of that comforter which he had promiſed, they now experienced a new attachment, and a tenderneſs towards each other which was derived from the ſpirit of infinite Benevolence.

The promiſe which the deceiver made to our firſt parents, that by eating of the forbidden fruit, *they ſhould be as Gods*, the diſciples of Chriſtianity effectually experienced. Their hearts were refined from

from human depravity, and they appeared actuated only by that ſocial and indiſcriminate kindneſs, which we apprehend to be the diſtinguiſhing attribute of the Deity—I ſay, indiſcriminate kindneſs; for the inſpired writer informs us, they were not only dear to each other, but that they had *favour of* ALL *the people*—a proof that their benevolence was univerſal; for, when the unimproved ſtate of human nature is conſidered, there can be no doubt but that they had amply merited this popular favour by their extenſive kindneſs, and their open liberality.

VI. Charity ſeeketh not her own.

No ſooner were the Chriſtians united by this principle of love, than all thoughts of

of private intereſt or property were overborne. *They had all things common: and ſold their poſſeſſions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.*

It is impoſſible to conſider theſe overflowings of an amiable and enthuſiaſtic generoſity without pleaſure and admiration; but impartiality muſt acknowledge that it was too great to be laſting, and too diffuſive to be long ſupported.—Had this ſpirit of unbounded benevolence and liberality been univerſal, and had the world been carried away by the ſame happy enthuſiaſm, the conſequences would not have been ſo inconvenient; but it was neceſſary that the votaries of chriſtianity ſhould ſubſiſt by a commerce with men of different perſuaſions, who would avail themſelves of the

the unbounded generoſity of the former, without relieving the diſtreſſes which that generoſity would produce.—Hence we find that the members of the infant church were frequently in the moſt neceſſitous circumſtances, and that the apoſtles had many times occaſion to ſolicit contributions to *the houſhold of faith*.

But however inconvenient this large liberality, this total diſregard of private property might, in ſome reſpect, be found, it was certainly preferable to that unfeeling ſelfiſhneſs, which has diſgraced the later ages of the chriſtian world.

Long, alas! hath been fled the liberal ſpirit of that charity which *ſeeketh not her own*. It's general influence, at leaſt, hath

hath long been loſt; for, though we ſee *ſome* glorious inſtances of the moſt pure and diſintereſted benevolence, how deeply ſunk in ſelfiſhneſs are the *bulk* of mankind; how deſtitute of every principle that centers not in private advantage! and how meanly enſlaved by the loweſt and moſt deſpicable of all attachments, the thirſt of gain!

Nor is univerſal liberality alone blotted out of that ſhining liſt of virtues which form the train of *the evangelical charity*; the iraſcible paſſions have too general an influence on the heart, and moſt of us, alas! are too apt to indulge them, though we know that

VII. Charity is not eaſily provoked.

It

It is not eaſy to determine whether the wiſdom or the goodneſs of ſuch a mind is greater——whether the lenity which paſſes over the inſults of others, or the prudence which defends us from the prevalence of anger, deſerves the higheſt praiſe.

To act aright in this particular, as well as in all others, we need but follow invariably the ſteps of our Redeemer, *who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he ſuffered, he threatened not; but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly.*

But to follow invariably the ſteps of the Redeemer is, perhaps, in this, as well as in all other circumſtances, impoſſible for human imperfection; and the

the Apoſtle, who was well acquainted with the paſſions and infirmities of his nature, ſeems to have been ſenſible of this truth, when he tells us that charity is not *eaſily* provoked; as if he had ſaid "there is a degree of injurious "inſult, or of cruel abuſe which human nature may not be able to bear: "Unirritated patience may, in ſome "caſes, be inconſiſtent with the intereſts of truth or virtue, and, in others, "with the firſt law of nature, ſelf-defence; but regard to the precepts of "our divine maſter; the preſervation of "our own tranquillity, and the peace "of ſociety, require that we ſhould be "*ſlow to anger*; that we ſhould not "*eaſily* give ourſelves up to the impulſe "of reſentment, but act, in all things, "like the diſciples of that meek and "glorious

" glorious ſufferer, who *returned not*
" *railing for railing, but, contrariwiſe,*
" *bleſſing.*"

To commit our cauſe *unto him that judgeth righteouſly* is the moſt proper determination for ſuch erring creatures as we are, who ſeldom know how to adjuſt the puniſhment to the fault, or, had we that knowledge, might be led beyond the bounds of juſtice by a partiality to our importance, or an indulgence of our reſentment.

Yet there are circumſtances, no doubt, wherein the well-being and even the exiſtence of ſociety oblige us to retaliate the injuries of the offender. Indiſcriminate forbearance, like unlimited munificence, can be practicable only in a ſtate

of

of chriſtian perfection: It would be as ſafe to forgive all where we ſhould meet with no *voluntary* inſults, as to give away our whole ſubſtance, when ſecure of ſupport in the beneficence of others.

But theſe are days, wherein, neither of the above mentioned virtues are to be carried to their utmoſt extent——It would be a diſparagement to the wiſdom and benevolence of the Supreme Being, to ſuppoſe that he ſhould exact an obedience from us which would either involve us in obvious miſery, or be pernicious to our country. Such a concluſion would be equally injurious to the honour of God, and abuſive of that reaſon he has given us for our preſervation.

But

But here the fanatic interpoſeth: and exclaims, "what will become of the "law of religion, if in any caſe, we may "recede from the ſeverity of the pre-"cept?" I do not think it neceſſary to reply to this objection here, becauſe I have, elſewhere *, ſhewn that the preſent perfection of the divine law was neceſſary, though human nature could not in all reſpects pay the exacted obedience.

Moreover, the conduct of the Apoſtle with regard to Hymeneus and Alexander, particularly the latter, ſhews, that there are circumſtances in which a proper reſentment may be indulged.

Though I here view the frailties of man with the eye of a brother, I plead for

* Letters between Theodoſius and Conſtantia.

no unneceſſary, or unreaſonable indulgence: I am perſuaded that divines and moraliſts have ever hurt the intereſts of religion and virtue, when they have required in both an impracticable perfection.

Conſcious of it's inability to arrive at conſummate excellence, the mind beholds it's duty with deſpair; when, guided by ſober judgment and reaſon, it might have made a happy progreſs in moral goodneſs.

When religion is painted by the puritan, and virtue by the romantic philoſopher, we ſhun the one as we would a ſpectre, and think of the other as of a dream.

In

In all our interpretations of ſcripture doctrines we ought never to loſe ſight of reaſon, nor of the eternal attributes of God. The firſt we know to be one of his gracious gifts, and that, therefore, he can recommend nothing to us as a duty, or even as a point of faith, that is inconſiſtent with it's perceptions: The laſt we conceive to be unchangeable, and invariably conſiſtent with each other.

Agreeably to theſe principles, let us enquire how we are to underſtand the Apoſtle, when he ſays that

VIII. Charity thinketh no evil.

This is to be underſtood according to the general ſenſe and acceptation of the expreſſion, and not in all the latitude

that the words will bear: In the original it is, * *doth not ſuppoſe any thing bad*, or doth not entertain any bad opinion.

This is a quality ſo peculiarly aſcribed to charity, that the cenſorious and the malevolent are branded with the appellation of *uncharitable*——Not, indeed, without juſtice, or propriety; for the charity of opinion may have as much merit as that of beneficence, and is equally neceſſary to the happineſs of ſociety.

Nothing can be a ſurer proof of a generous diſpoſition, of a heart that is humanized by the precepts of Chriſtianity, than, in general, to think candidly and favourably of others.

* Ὁ λογιζεῖαι τι κακον.

The

The ſentiments of the mind take their colour frequently from the inclinations of the heart, and ſuch as we know ourſelves, we imagine others to be. A good man will not eaſily think evil of his fellow-creatures, but will give to all the credit of virtue, till experience and the evidence of facts have convinced him that they do not deſerve it.

Caution, however, and the ſenſe of that malignity which is the diſgrace of our ſpecies ſhould not be totally abſent from the thoughts of a good man. Too indiſcriminate a charity of opinion may make him the dupe of villainy, and the generoſity of his ſpirit and his ſentiments may contribute to the ſucceſs of deſigning wickedneſs.

In ſuch a caſe he would have reaſon to lament, that while he had attended to one of his maſter's precepts, he had neglected another; and would be convinced that, in a world like this, the *wiſdom of the ſerpent*, was by no means leſs neceſſary than the *innocence of the dove*.

The good, however, which he hopes and thinks of mankind will gratify both his expectations and his benevolence, when he beholds it practiſed; and the viſible exerciſe of juſtice and veracity will yield him the moſt perfect ſatisfaction. For,

IX. Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.

The

The happineſs which virtue gives is not derived alone from the private and perſonal practice of it. Every true friend to piety and goodneſs has a real pleaſure in their ſucceſs, and generouſly and happily intereſts himſelf in it.

In the ſucceſs of iniquity charity cannot rejoice, becauſe that ſucceſs is prejudicial to the common welfare; but the prevalence of truth, the proſperity of goodneſs, and the eſtabliſhment of juſtice cannot but be grateful to that extenſive benevolence which embraces human kind, and rejoiceth in the viſible happineſs of the world.

That charity would, indeed, be narrow and imperfect, which ſhould not comprehend the general intereſts of vir-

tue, nor concern itſelf beyond the limits of perſonal connections.

The evangelical charity takes a wider range, and having at heart the univerſal happineſs of mankind, rejoiceth, upon thoſe principles, when truth and righteouſneſs flouriſh on the earth.

It is, moreover, her ſupreme delight when the religion of her divine maſter prevails among men; that exalted philanthropiſt, with whom ſhe exiſted from the ages of eternity, and in whoſe boſom ſhe ſhall repoſe when time ſhall be no more.

SERMON XV.

The Evangelical Charity.

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1 Cor. xiii. 7.

Charity *beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

THAT meek and ſubmitting ſpirit, that patient ſuffering, and ſilent reſignation by which the Author of our religion was ſo amiably diſtinguiſhed, could not but be included among thoſe moral graces, which are comprehended under this extenſive term of *charity*.

X. Cha-

X. Charity beareth all things; endureth all things.

Patience is not leſs peculiarly an attribute of chriſtianity than it was of that philoſophy of old, which went under the name of Stoiciſm—But the patience of a Chriſtian is of a very different nature, and founded on principles very oppoſite to that of the Stoic. The former ariſes from the diſpoſition of the heart; the latter reſted on an ideal fortitude; the mere philoſophy of the brain. —The former has its origin in humility; the latter was the offspring of pride. The Chriſtian is reſigned as a being dependent on, and ſubmiſſive to the diſpenſations of Providence: The principles of the Stoic's patience were centered in himſelf, and conſiſted in a vain and unna-

unnatural affectation of despising exterior evils.——The Christian acknowledges the power of calamity, and the distresses of pain, but submits to them from a religious acquiescence in whatever the supreme Governor of the universe is pleased to permit——The Stoic idly endeavoured to persuade himself that there was no such thing as evil in the world, and, destitute of the comforts that attend a resignation on religious principles, languished under the irresistible attacks of misery, while he was making fruitless efforts to believe that misery had no existence.

Behold here, how superior is that wisdom which cometh from above, to the unassisted searches of human reason! how blind, and bewildered were the

the children of philoſophy, compared to thoſe that walk in the light of the living God! How vain were their attempts to find a remedy for the evils of life, excluſive of thoſe hopes of immortality, which the goſpel brought to light? How inferior in all that is truly great and magnanimous were the diſciples of Zeno to thoſe of Jeſus Chriſt! —The followers of the heathen philoſopher, to avoid the inconvenient effects of their paſſions, were taught to oppoſe their laudable exertions, and thereby defeated that end for which nature had appointed them.—To arrive at fortitude, they aimed at inſenſibility, and, in cultivating patience, deſtroyed all the gentle affections. To be exempt from miſery, they endeavoured to deprive the heart of its feelings, and, from a ſelf-

a ſelfiſh view of ſecuring their own tranquillity, they proudly branded compaſſion with the name of weakneſs.

Upon far more amiable and more noble principles, the fortitude of a Chriſtian is formed. His patience is the aſſociate of CHARITY, and by that quality, which implies the love of God and of humankind, he is taught to bear what the wiſe providence of the former may have permitted, or the weakneſs of the latter may have brought upon him.

The patience that is derived from ſuch a diſpoſition is not to be wearied out by the frequent attacks of miſery: The ſame principles will laſt for ever, and will ſupport him under the repeated viſitations of affliction.——It is the exalted

exalted ſpirit of this charity, this divine and ſocial love, that renders him ſuperior to the ſufferings of human calamity. It is an emanation of the Deity himſelf, a diſpoſition derived from and approaching towards the ſupreme perfection, which places him above the influence of mortal evil.

The happineſs and perfection of human nature conſiſt in making the neareſt poſſible approaches to the diſpoſition of God; and in nothing can man repreſent his divine Creator ſo much as in this exalted ſpirit of *the Evangelical Charity*. From this he acquires an inclination of being pleaſed and ſatisfied with every thing, and that habit of mind which makes him chearful under circumſtances of eaſe, renders him reſigned

ſigned to the ſtroke of affliction. "*Shall* "*we*, ſaith he, *receive good at the hand* "*of the Lord? and ſhall we not* ſubmit "to *evil?* As the ſtate of man is deter- "mined by the unerring Wiſdom to be "a ſtate of probation, ſhall we not bear "with patience thoſe temporary evils "which are frequently ſo ſalutary to the "mind, and afford the nobleſt exerciſe "to virtue?"

But the *Captain of our ſalvation*, who was *made perfect through ſufferings*, enforces this patience as well by the perſuaſion of example, as by the authority of precept.

See how mild! how ſilent the illuſtrious Sufferer! under the laſt diſtreſs of nature how patient! how reſigned! he prayeth, indeed, that the bitter cup

of affliction may paſs from him, but under an entire reſignation to the divine will.

"Father, if this cup may not paſs "from me, unleſs I drink it, thy will "be done."

Such were the expreſſions of our divine Maſter, and ſuch ought to be the language of every Chriſtian, under the various circumſtances of natural, or of moral evil, to which, as mortal creatures, we are expoſed.

Nor ought we leſs induſtriouſly to imitate our bleſſed Redeemer in his conduct towards men than towards his heavenly Father. His patience in the one is equally exemplary as his reſignation in the other.

It was to follow the ſteps of their Lord in both theſe reſpects, that the Apoſtles were reconciled to the ſevereſt ſufferings and the moſt degrading contempt.

"I think," ſaith one of the moſt eloquent, and not the leaſt ſufferer of thoſe holy meſſengers, "that God hath ſet "forth us, the Apoſtles laſt, as it were "appointed to death. For we are made "a ſpectacle unto the world, and to "angels, and to men.

"We are fools for Chriſt's ſake; we "are weak; we are deſpiſed.

"Even unto this preſent hour, we "both hunger and thirſt, and are nak-"ed, and are buffetted; and have no "certain dwelling-place:

" And labour, working with our own " hands. Being reviled, we bleſs; be- " ing perſecuted, we ſuffer it; being " defamed, we intreat."

There is ſcarce any circumſtance of human affliction, which theſe devoted men did not ſuffer, and moſt of them, indeed, they have themſelves recorded. —Nor is it to be wondered that they ſhould record them, ſince they gloried in their perſecutions, and counted it joy that they were thought *worthy* to ſuffer ſhame in the cauſe of the Redeemer.

But it was, nevertheleſs, on this grace of charity, this divine and ſocial love, that all their fortitude and their forbearance were founded. Unſupported by this living and active principle, nature might have overthrown the reſolutions

lutions of reaſon, even while the latter was appealed to by the hopes of immortality.

The ſenſe of preſent evil has ſo much more influence over the frailty of human nature, than the proſpect of diſtant good, that though the immediate ſufferings of the Apoſtles were not to be compared with their future rewards, yet, as men, they might have *fainted under* their *tribulations*, had not their hearts been confirmed by this animating, this heaven-inſpired ſpirit of Charity.

Love is an active and unwearied principle, that is neither to be overcome by difficulties, nor deterred by dangers. For ever tending towards it's object,

and every affection of the heart abſorbed in the intereſt of that object, all circumſtances that are foreign to this end are conſidered as indifferent, and all the inconveniences that attend the purſuit of it are borne without a murmur.

The object of the Apoſtles love was their amiable, their adorable maſter.—With unwearied perſeverance they preached his doctrines—with unbounded affection they purſued his intereſts—No labour was too difficult to execute; no miſery too painful to bear.——Inſpired by that charity which *beareth, which endureth all things*, they rejoiced in affliction, and triumphed over death. This was that love of God in Chriſt Jeſus their Lord, from which one of them declares, that neither death nor life, nor princi-

principalities, nor powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, ſhould be able to ſeparate them.

This triumphant declaration was invariably fulfilled in all the conduct of the ſainted ſufferers.—Life they eſteemed not, but as it was exerciſed in eſtabliſhing the religion of their Lord; and death they counted gain. Human principalities and powers were of little weight with *them*, who concluded that it was better to obey God than man; and who, when they were brought before rulers and kings for their maſter's name, were ſo far from being deterred by their authority, that they boldly preached his doctrines and aſſerted his truth in their preſence.——Things preſent did not,

and things to come could not weaken their faith, or weary out their love—— nor could heighth or depth, in which the utmoſt bounds of nature, and every poſſible contingency are implied, have power to change that charity which *never faileth*, which came down from heaven, and aſpired to it again.

With reſpect, indeed, to bearing and enduring, thoſe properties of charity were in a more extraordinary manner exerciſed in the perſons of the apoſtles, than they have been, or, at leaſt, now are in any members of the Chriſtian Church.—If our graces, if our gifts are not equal to thoſe which the firſt promoters of Chriſtianity poſſeſſed, neither are our trials equal to theirs.—The Almighty Providence ſeems always to have

have proportioned the powers of his ſervants to the exigencies of the time, and to have granted ſuch degrees of grace and faith as might be adequate to the perſecutions or temptations that were to be undergone.

Poſſibly that exalted degree of charity, which the apoſtles derived from the ſpirit of God, may be now no more; but, as we are expreſsly told that it never faileth, ſo much of it muſt ſtill remain as may be neceſſary to ſupport us in the ſeveral departments of duty, and to place us above the influence of accidental calamities or temptations.

We have not what the apoſtles had to bear—We are not perſecuted on the account of religion; but life has many

other moral evils which call upon us for ſuch a ſpirit of reſignation and patience as is inſpired by the love of God and of humankind.

There are, moreover, many other graces neceſſary, though poſſibly not in ſo great a degree, for us as they were for the apoſtles; nor is it by any means unimportant to us that

XI. Charity hopeth all things, believeth all things.

Whether we ſuppoſe that this hope, aſcribed by the Apoſtle to charity, is to be accepted in a moral, or in a religious ſenſe, it will be found equally neceſſary to our peace. We ſhall do wiſely, therefore, to cultivate it in both;

both; and ſhall find it for our happineſs neither to fear every thing from man, while we hope every thing from God; nor yet, while we hope every thing from man, to fear every thing from God.

Either of theſe apprehenſions muſt be equally deſtructive of our peace: Our dependence on the Almighty muſt make us everlaſtingly wretched, if accompanied only by fear; and our commerce with our fellow-creatures would render us miſerable, were all confidence, all hope at an end. He who hopeth all things from God, gives that honour to his merciful attributes, which is due from reaſon and from gratitude; he who hopeth every thing from man, even though he ſhould often be diſappointed, is poſſeſſed of a happier, becauſe

cauſe of a more benevolent temper, than thoſe that look upon mankind as in a ſtate of general enmity, and think of every man they meet with, as of a deſigning foe.

However, with reſpect to our hope both from God, and from man, ſome reſtrictions, no doubt, are neceſſary; what we know of the diſpoſition of our fellow-creatures, and what we believe of the nature of the ſupreme Being, ought to regulate our expectations in regard to both.

We are not to hope that the eternal Lover of truth and juſtice can leave unpuniſhed the tranſgreſſors of his ſacred laws. We believe that he is a rewarder only of the ſincere of heart, the faithful

ful and the honeſt; and from thence we may conclude, with the ſacred writer, that *the hope of the hypocrite ſhall periſh.*

Experience convinceth us, that, with reſpect to our fellow-creatures, univerſal righteouſneſs is far from prevailing among men: It is, therefore, neceſſary for our own ſecurity, that our hopes of them ſhould be bounded by reaſon and experience—that we ſhould neither indiſcriminately judge of the whole ſpecies as deſtitute of every moral principle, nor implicitly truſt them with our lives and fortunes.—The firſt ſentiment would always be injurious to the community; the other might, many times, be detrimental to ourſelves.

In this manner, and under theſe reſtrictions, to hope and to believe will, I truſt, be found conſiſtent with THE EVANGELICAL CHARITY.

SERMON XVI.

The Doctrine of Repentance.

JOB xi. 13, 14.

If thou prepare thine heart, and ſtretch out thy hands towards him; if iniquity be in thy hands, put it far away, and let not wickedneſs dwell in thy tabernacles.

EVER ſince religion was publiſhed in the world, repentance has been conſidered as a part of it.

We muſt, however, except the firſt publication of the will of God. Our firſt

firſt parents were created perfect, and if they tranſgreſſed the religious obligation which they received from their Creator, they were by no means to be excuſed through an act of repentance; for repentance only can be admitted in a ſtate of imperfection.

But when this became the ſtate of man—when by the loſs of his original innocence, and the high privileges of his nature, he became an eaſy prey to every temptation, it was neceſſary that the divine lawgiver ſhould no longer be *extreme to mark what was done amiſs*—that he ſhould accept of ſome ſacrifice for ſin, ſome ſatisfaction for the breach of thoſe laws, which, without ſuch acknowledgements, would have loſt their authority; and, had no ſuch acknowledgements

ledgements been admitted, would have proved miniſters of wrath, to eſtabliſh more univerſally the dominion of death.

Theſe ſacrifices were at firſt a kind of penal taſk, till the improving arts of ſociety had rendered it eaſy to procure them, and the increaſe of property facilitated the commiſſion of ſin.

Hence, in the Jewiſh church of old, it was as eaſy for a rich man to ſin, and to expiate, as it is, at preſent, in the church of *Rome*.

This abuſe of the original intention of ſacrifices, was complained of by thoſe prophets and legiſlators, who, being of a more liberal turn, concluded that the Almighty could no longer be pleaſed with

with any of thoſe external atonements, which, as they were now ſo eaſily effected, could no more ſtrengthen the authority of the laws, than they could tend to the perfection or the improvement of manners.

In the divine name, therefore, they called upon the people to *bring no more vain oblations*, but to *turn from their evil ways*, and to offer that ſacrifice to God, which alone could be acceptable to a reaſonable being, a heart that repented of its former wickedneſs.

This is what we mean by that repentance, which, under the Chriſtian ſyſtem likewiſe, qualifies us for the mercies of God, and the mediation of Chriſt.

I have

I have not found this duty laid down any where more regularly than in the above quoted words of Job's friend.

The whole of it is ſpecified in four particulars:

I. The preparation of the heart.

II. The act of humiliation before God.

"If thou prepare thy heart, and "ſtretch out thy hands towards him."

III. We have inſtructions for our conduct, in conſequence of ſuch a preparation and humiliation.

"If iniquity be in thy hands, put it "far away."

IV. And laſtly, an exhortation, agreeable to the former, to regard the conduct of our families.

"And let not wickedneſs dwell in thy "tabernacles."

The firſt mentioned, as it is the firſt neceſſary duty, is the preparation of the heart; a duty not leſs difficult in the execution, than important in the end; for *the heart is deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked:* To unfold, and to examine clearly into all it's principles, to diſcover and expoſe it's reconciling arts, and to trace it through the receſſes of vanity and of care, is a taſk for Omniſcience; nor is it from the loweſt conviction of the Almighty Power that he is called *the ſearcher of hearts.*

Self-examination, however neceſſary, is ſeldom agreeable: Even *piety* is ſometimes

times afraid of finding too many weaknesses for the divine indulgence; and it is the industry of vice to steal from conviction, and to tread softly by the sleeping lion.

Let not, however, a good man be afraid to search his heart, nor to lay open his failings before his father who is in heaven.——The God of mercies and of wisdom will not suffer his creatures to be *tempted above what they are able* to bear, *but will, with the temptation, make a way to escape.* Whoever is free from the abandoned guilt of voluntary crimes need not doubt to find acceptance with him, whose merits have made satisfaction for the involuntary and inseparable frailties of human nature.

But ſhameleſs and obdurate vice has much more to do. He, who has been long deaf to the remonſtrances of reaſon and of conſcience, in whom the principles of wickedneſs have been confirmed by habit and by time, will find it a work of labour to remove that barrier he has been ſo induſtrious to raiſe between himſelf and his ſalvation.

When the mind has been long enſlaved by wickedneſs, it is in danger of loſing even the liberty of changing it's principles, and of reſcuing itſelf from the tyranny of vicious habits.

Unhappy for the hardened ſinner, that the work of repentance is to him ſo great; yet more unhappy, if he ſlumbers in unalarmed ſecurity, to be awaked

awaked only by the laſt ſtroke of death!

Let him whoſe life has reſembled, but who would not wiſh that his laſt end ſhould be like this, inſtantly *prepare his heart* for the buſineſs of repentance——Let not his averſion to religion, nor even his eaſe and ſecurity under his preſent circumſtances, render him inattentive to his duty, or repreſs the ſenſe of the divine diſapprobation. He cannot be without a reaſonable conviction, if he compare his conduct with the laws of God; and a reaſonable conviction once excited, what remains but to impreſs the force of it on the heart?

Yet, alas! when the heart ſhould be thus addreſſed, other arguments interfere, and bear down the force of reaſon, and of conſcience.

The man of pleaſure cannot conceive how there ſhould be any happineſs in the enjoyments of the mind, or that it can exiſt in any thing except the gratification of the ſenſes——As there are, in general, contrary to the precepts of Chriſtianity, he cannot think of conforming to the rules of conduct that preclude his favourite purſuits, or of languiſhing away an undiverſified life in penal auſterities, and monaſtic dulneſs——Such are his ideas of religion, which he conſiders only as a gloomy inſtitution, that dooms its votaries to ſadneſs and melancholy.

The

The man of avarice, who knows no pleaſure but in the acquiſition of riches —the ambitious and the vain, who can be gratified only by the dreams of eminence, and the flattery of dependence— the villain of every denomination, under the maſk of piety, or the front of profligacy—Theſe will hardly be induced by any convictions of reaſon to embrace thoſe precepts which deny them their pleaſures, and thoſe doctrines that would change the ſyſtem of their lives.

But religion's moſt prevailing rivals for the heart, are the love of pleaſure, and the deſire of fame—Theſe paſſions were given us by the wiſe and benevolent author of nature for gracious and for glorious ends—to direct us for the firſt to the fountains of immortal life,

and for the laſt to the approbation of our God.

From the perverſion of theſe paſſions we derive much of our ſin and miſery.

The queſt of pleaſure is generally confined to our younger years——whatever flatters the preſent appetite, we purſue with all the eagerneſs of inexperience, alike regardleſs of the admonitions of thoſe who have proved the vanity of this world's enjoyments, and the doctrines of thoſe who remind us of another——The heart has found whereon it may repoſe, and to *prepare* it for repentance from what it approves, though it were *repentance from dead works*, would be utterly impracticable. —Before the heart can repent, it muſt

firſt learn to diſapprove it's purſuits and attachments.

Here then let me obſerve to the young and the gay, that thoſe idle pleaſures they are now in purſuit of, are, in general, not only beneath the dignity of a reaſonable being, but will, certainly, after a ſhort time, delight no more—— Youth and beauty are poſſeſſions they are parting with every day. The rejoicing ſpirits of manly vigour, the exulting hope, the enchanting proſpect, *ſhall*, in a few, *may* in a *very* few years be extinguiſhed in the dark manſions of the grave.

Every fair form that is now animated with lively ſenſe and ſprightly fancy, ſhall ſoon moulder in the common duſt; ſenſeleſs

ſenſeleſs and forgotten through a ſeries of ages——Perhaps, ere we once more aſſemble in this ſacred place——Perhaps, before to-morrow's ſun ſhall ſet, ſome ear that is now attending to theſe obſervations may be cloſed in inſenſibility.

How vain then to form any engaging attachments, except that *one* which is *needful*, in a life ſo ſhort, and, in all things ſo uncertain! Vain, at the beſt, are all the pleaſures of youth; but more ridiculouſly vain are the worldly purſuits of age.

Ambition and vanity, which are the offspring of the before-mentioned perverted love of fame, are not ſeldom to be found in thoſe years, which wiſdom and

and experience ſhould have crowned with virtue—Yet, is it poſſible? Can age have it's vanities? Shall the plume of folly nod over grey hairs? Can there be any thing here of conſequence enough to alarm or intereſt thoſe, who ſhortly are departing never to return? What is the buſineſs, what are the mighty engagements that can employ the prudence and wiſdom of age? Can it be exerciſed in the purſuit of titles, or honours?—in adding new decorations to an houſe, or new dignities to a name?—in courting the breath of popular favour, or in feaſting on the flying rumour of the day?—Are theſe the employments of declining life? and do theſe prevent the heart from *preparing* itſelf for the great buſineſs of repentance?

But

But if the arguments which are drawn from the vanity of earthly purſuits ſhould not have ſufficient weight to overcome our attachments to them, the proſpects and the ſanctions of futurity cannot, ſurely, be conſidered in vain.

The ſenſe of a total excluſion from happineſs, and from God——the final forfeiture of that immortality which the mercies of redemption have ſecured, and the glad tidings of the goſpel have brought to light, muſt on a mind, not loſt to ſenſibility, as well as to reaſon, have a ſtriking effect.

Yet ſhould every argument, however concluſive, ſhould every motive, however powerful, fail to excite in the abandoned a ſenſe of his miſery, and *to pre-*

pare

pare for repentance the heart where vice has been long eſtabliſhed, though human means are ineffectual, there is yet a reſource in that power to whom nothing is impoſſible.

He who has been long under the influence of ſin, ſhould he behold the danger to which he is expoſed—ſhould he be convinced of the ruinous condition of wickedneſs, yet find his heart unwilling to quit it's preſent attachments—nothing remains for ſuch a one but to apply to the divine bounty for grace and aſſiſtance.—Yet this is by no means a precarious reſource; for, has it not the confirmation of a divine promiſe, that the returning ſinner ſhall not ſue in vain? and is not he *faithful who hath promiſed?*

This

This introduces the ſecond circumſtance in the progreſs of repentance, viz. *The act of humiliation before God.*

"When thou haſt prepared thy heart; "lift up thy hands towards him."

When we addreſs our prayers to a power ſo infinitely ſuperior to us as the Almighty is conceived to be, we cannot be too attentive to the propriety even of our external deportment. And that attitude of body which carries with it the marks of ſubmiſſion we ſhould do well to obſerve, becauſe it is nothing more than another kind of ſpeech, or expreſſion, that indicates the meaning of the mind.

But whatever be the poſture of the body, during our penitential prayers, let

us be eſpecially attentive to the condition of the mind.

Let our prayers aſcend with ſuch a degree of faith as may entitle us *to come unto God* by *believing that he is, and that he is a rewarder of all ſuch as call upon him faithfully.* Let us not render ourſelves diſqualified for his mercies, by entertaining any doubt that he will extend them even to us.—Let us conclude that the humble ſpirit which acknowledges it's weakneſs, and ſeeks for ſtrength in the Lord of armies, ſhall never be diſappointed of aſſiſtance, or of grace.

Let us remember that the Father of mercies is always more ready to hear than we to pray, and that he is, indeed, wont to give more than we can poſſibly deſerve.

deſerve.—It would be endleſs to enumerate the many paſſages in the holy ſcriptures that contain the gracious promiſes of reconciliation to returning ſinners—The all-merciful God will in *no wiſe caſt out ſuch as come unto him*—Thoſe that *ſeek* ſhall *find*, and to thoſe that *knock* it ſhall be *opened*. *He who ſpared not his own ſon, ſhall he not with him freely give us all things?*

Such gracious encouragement have we on the part of God; an encouragement which muſt for ever enhance the guilt of obſtinate and impenitent wickedneſs—Were the Almighty repreſented to us as a ſevere Being, as hard to be intreated, iraſcible and revengeful, we might have ſome excuſe for our fear though none for our folly—but ſurely to

to neglect the kindneſs, the indulgence of the ſupreme mercy muſt be the higheſt aggravation of daring impiety.

In the ſolemn act of humiliation before God, let us remember chiefly to conſider the vaſt diſtance between fallen man and his Creator. That thought will work in us an humble frame of mind, and an awful reverence of the Father of ſpirits.

When we conſider that the eye of that immortal Being, whoſe favour and forgiveneſs we ſolicit, is upon us—— that the Almighty is, in preſence, witneſs to our thoughts, it muſt unavoidably affect us with the moſt ſolemn ſentiments.—— This conſideration ought, indeed, to be preſent with us on every occaſion, but

moſt particularly during the ſacrifice of penitential prayer.

He who reflects that the all-ſeeing eye of Heaven can pierce the inmoſt receſſes of the ſoul, will not only be humble in his deportment, but ſincere in his intentions; and, when he is lifting up his *hands towards God, if iniquity be in them,* will *put it far away.*

SERMON XVII.

The Doctrine of Repentance.

JOB xi. 13, 14.

If thou prepare thine heart, and ſtretch out thy hands towards him, if iniquity be in thy hands, put it far away, and let not wickedneſs dwell in thy tabernacles.

III. IN the act of repentance, let it ever be remembered, that the eſſential part of it is the relinquiſhment of ſin. This, certainly, is the only end that can make it acceptable to a Being

who is divinely and perfectly reaſonable. For can we be ſo ſtupid as to ſuppoſe, with abſurd monaſtics, that the Almighty is to be gratified by penal auſterities? Shall we blaſpheme his honour, and diſparage his attributes with the rites of Moloch? Shall we believe that he delights in the ſacrifice of groans and ſcourgings, that he rejoices in the meagre aſpect of mortified melancholy, or exults like envy over proſtrate wretchedneſs?——How long ſhall we confine religion to forms, and forget the ſubſtance? When ſhall we give the credit due to the Apoſtle, who tells us, that *pure religion and undefiled before God, is to viſit the fatherleſs and widows, in their affliction, and to keep ourſelves unſpotted of the world.*

Thus,

Thus, in conſequence of our repentance, a negative goodneſs is not alone ſufficient.—It is not enough merely, *if iniquity be in our hands, to put it far away*, nor ſhall we have fully diſcharged our duty, by *keeping ourſelves unſpotted of the world.*—The taſk of active virtue remains to be performed, and the performance thereof is certainly a more acceptable atonement than all ſacrifices and oblations of whatever denomination.

Let the pious craft of conventual ſuperſtition teach that crimes are to be expiated by religious dedications, and by munificence idly employed in enriching the retreats of holy indolence.—Let them inſpire their deluded followers with the vain confidence, that their ſins

may be abſolved by church-gratuities and inſignificant penances:——thanks to the kindneſs and the care of Providence, we have ſhaken off thoſe yokes that fetter the underſtanding. Holding faſt *the liberty with which Chriſt hath made us free*, we dare to think out of the channel of Churchmen, and to enquire what modes of duty a reaſonable Being muſt expect from his creatures.

We know (for reaſon aſſents while revelation teaches) what kind of worſhip ought to be paid to that intellectual Providence who *requireth truth in the inward parts*.

We are ſenſible, we are naturally conſcious that forms and ceremonies have no

no merit with HIM——that he regardeth not the labour of the lips, and that no mode of repentance can be agreeable to him, which does not finally influence the conduct of our lives.—— As the immediate Governor of the univerſe, it can only be to his purpoſe that our morals are improved, and that we are more beneficial to ourſelves and to our fellow-creatures. For theſe ends, undoubtedly, it was, that religion was inſtituted, and that the ſenſe of divine ſanctions was impreſſed upon the mind. What is it to a Being infinitely happy and ſecure in his own perfections, whether ſo low a creature as man ſhould regard him with reverence, or be ignorant of his exiſtence? From the ſame benevolent motives that he gave us life, he gave us laws for the regulation of

it; that we ſhould not wander in the blindneſs of our mind, nor look for happineſs out of that ſphere of duty in which we are directed to move.

When, therefore, we conſider the divine motives in the appointment of our religious conduct, we muſt unavoidably conclude that a moral and practical, not a ceremonial,—or formal worſhip muſt be what he requires from us.

Hence, it muſt well become us to reflect that ſincerity in our reſolutions of amendment muſt be the eſſential, and, indeed, the only acceptable part of repentance. Unleſs we are ſerious in the deſign of reformation, a few tranſitory ſighs or tears will by no means

avail

avail us—will never atone for our paſt offences, and much leſs entitle us to any future indulgence.—How replete with folly, moreover, muſt ſuch a conduct be? for what is it elſe but to diſſemble with infinite Knowledge, while we ſolicit Heaven for a while to ſpare the interpoſing rod, that we may have reſpite and convenience for the repetition of our crimes?

Man is frequently guilty of an act of involuntary impiety, and though a ſhort-ſighted creature, is apt to meaſure the capacity and conduct of his Creator by his own. He forgets, while he is offering him this formal worſhip, that *he ſearcheth the heart*, and *knoweth our thoughts long before.* Blind, and fooliſh and unthinking as he is, he is

even

even leſs circumſpect in his conduct towards the Almighty, than in his tranſactions with his fellow-creatures;—never would he hope from theſe any favour, or indulgence, while he ſcrupled not to do every thing that was injurious or diſagreeable to them.—To expect favour from an object which he voluntarily offends is an inſult which man only practiſes on his God.

But is it, then, in vain he is told that *the hopes of the hypocrite ſhall periſh?*—Is it in vain, he is ſummoned from his dream of miſtaken ſecurity by that voice which calls him to ariſe from *dead works?*

But let him, nevertheleſs, be told, that to make a form of reconciliation with

with God without a deſign never more to offend him, to lift up our hands towards him, before they are *waſhed in innocency*, and to pray for aſſiſting grace, without taking one ſtep for reformation, is nothing elſe but to mock the preſence of the Almighty, and to deride the counſels of the Moſt High.

The villain who deceives under the ſanctity of friendſhip——The vicious ſervant, who, by the profeſſions of officious honeſty, ſecures to himſelf his maſter's favour, that he may enjoy longer and more eaſy opportunities of committing his depredations, have, in human conſideration, ſomething of the ſame guilt with theſe unreforming penitents, if to call them penitents be not an abuſe of the term:——for repentance neceſ-

ſarily

ſarily implies converſion, and, without it, is nothing.

Sorrow and contrition and humiliation by no means effect the main buſineſs. —If the heart is not made better, if the ſprings of action, and the principles of conduct are not influenced, if our lives are not rectified, nor our inclinations changed, ſorrow and contrition and humiliation, whether real, or affected, are equally vain.

A ſudden emotion, a tranſitory impulſe, a conſtitutional turn of paſſion may fill the breaſt of vice with an involuntary ſigh, and force from the eye of wantonneſs an unmeaning tear.

The

The ſolemn form of humiliating ſeverity may be put on by the hypocrite of every denomination——but the firm reſolution of amendment, the ſincere regret for paſt offences, and the heart-felt acknowledgement of guilt and frailty are the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtics of the true penitent. He knows that the reſolutions of future piety muſt be the only acceptable ſacrifice he can make for thoſe errors in his conduct of which he is now aſhamed, and, through the merits of the divine mediation, the only means of a reconciliation with that offended Power whoſe laws he has broken. He will ſtudiouſly endeavour to fortify his heart againſt the future inſinuations of vice, and avoid, with induſtry, every occurrence and invitation, that might again engage him in the ſervice of ſin,

Conſcious of the weakneſs of his moral powers, and convinced, by lamented experience, of the natural depravity of the human heart, he will not place his laſt confidence in himſelf, but will apply to that gracious Being, for protection and aſſiſtance, who has promiſed his ſupporting grace to every faithful prayer.

Like the penitent here deſcribed, let every one who undertakes the great buſineſs of repentance, regulate his conduct and direct his heart.

Let him who humbles himſelf and lifts up *his hands towards God*, form, in the mean time, theſe determinations of obedience; for well may he be aſſured that, without them, his profeſſions of

of ſorrow and humiliation will be as impious as they are impertinent, as odious as they are vain. His petitions for the divine indulgence and forgiveneſs, without concurring reſolutions of moral reformation, ſhall riſe up againſt him as ſo many dreadful teſtimonies of his audacious hypocriſy, and abandoned guilt.

But are theſe arguments, you will ſay, at all neceſſary? Is it not univerſally obvious, and as univerſally allowed, that no repentance can be acceptable to God except that which brings an actual reformation of manners along with it?— It is indeed univerſally obvious, and, I hope, univerſally allowed; but nevertheleſs the general conduct of mankind convinces us, that arguments on this

this ſubject are, by no means, ſuperfluous.

Let every man appeal to his own heart, and aſk himſelf whether he has not, ſome time or other, made a form of ineffectual repentance—whether he has not, during the tranſitory prevalence of a pious diſpoſition, implored the forgiveneſs of Heaven, with feeble and unconfirmed reſolutions of future virtue;—reſolutions that have been quickly overborne by the influence of the world, and have yielded to the firſt attacks of temptation!—Yet if there are few who have thus vainly repented in private; who is there, that, in the forms of public worſhip, has not joined in the general confeſſion of ſin? who has not thus publickly acknowledged his tranſ-

tranſgreſſions, has not prayed that he might *hereafter lead a godly, righteous, and ſober life*, and in all reſpects, gone through what may at leaſt be called a general form of repentance, without regarding either the import, or the end of it?

Thus far with reſpect to the neceſſity of a *practical* repentance, one part of which muſt neceſſarily be an attention to that FAMILY RELIGION, which is the laſt thing ſuggeſted to us in the ſubject of this diſcourſe.

IV. Were once the important points of repentance and reformation gained, ſcarce any arguments would ſeem requiſite to enforce this charge; but as the narrowneſs and weakneſs of the human

capacity is ſuch that a due attention is ſeldom paid to the moſt obvious points of duty, the friend of Job added nothing ſuperfluous when he recommended domeſtic piety to the penitent.

Every principal of a family, whether his houſhold conſiſts only of ſuch as are connected to him by nature, or of menial dependents, or of both, ought always to remember, that as the firſt have a natural, ſo the laſt have a moral right to his patronage and direction——and that in proportion as the intereſts of a future life are ſuperior to the engagements of this, he ought, in reaſon, to exert that care for the ſpiritual welfare of his family, which, in humanity, he would exerciſe for their temporal advantage.

The

The parent is led by the dictates of nature, to conſult the happineſs of his children, but it is not always that his cares are wiſely, or effectually employed.

To promote the preſent intereſt, and to increaſe the fortunes of their offspring moſt parents are, indeed, ſufficiently ſolicitous; and this no doubt is a laudable, but ought only to be a ſecondary concern.——The obligations of moral honeſty, the duties of religion and the care of the immortal ſoul, ought to be the firſt objects of every parent's attention.

It is a happier, it is a nobler thing to make one child honeſt, than to make many rich.—To direct the ſteps of youth to tread firmly in the paths of virtue,

to inſtruct them how to guard againſt the ſolicitations of unlawful and deſtructive pleaſures, and to fortify the unpractiſed heart againſt the inſinuations of vice, is a neceſſary and a glorious taſk; a taſk, which to every parent who has a rightly-founded affection for his offſpring, brings the reward of its labour along with it.

Can any human action be more meritorious than thoſe that tend to the everlaſting happineſs of our fellow-creatures? ——To open the blind eyes, to direct the ſimple in their way, and to inſtruct the ignorant in the road that leadeth to life!

As a proof how excellent and how acceptable are theſe duties, we are told,

told, that *they who turn many to righteouſneſs ſhall ſhine as the ſtars in the firmament.*

But were there no promiſſory rewards annexed to the performance of theſe generous offices, the benevolent affections of nature ſhould ſurely have ſufficient influence with us to recommend them.

If the affections of nature are overborne, yet prudent conſiderations might induce us to the practice of family religion. A ſociety that daily unites in private prayer muſt have ſtrong inducements to mutual faith and affection: for that member of a family muſt be abandoned indeed, and utterly loſt to all influence of conſcience, who can abuſe the confidence of a friend, in whoſe prayers

he bears a part, and whom he accompanies in the ſolemn worſhip of the Almighty God.

I leave theſe ſeveral arguments to your conſideration, and intreat the God of mercies to direct you in the uſe of them.

SERMON XVIII.

The Sufferings and Expectations of the Apoſtles an Argument in Favour of the Chriſtian Religion.

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1 Cor. xv. 19.

If in this life only we have hope in Chriſt, we are of all men the moſt miſerable.

THOUGH the genius and temper of the Chriſtian religion render almoſt every other argument in it's favour unneceſſary, yet, perhaps, the cir-

cumſtances of it's early ſtate afford the moſt convincing proofs that it's origin is divine.

If we conſider that the perſons appointed, by our bleſſed Redeemer, to plant the goſpel in all nations, were, moſt of them, without learning, and without influence, the concluſion is obvious, that nothing but an Almighty hand could have ſupported them againſt the pride of knowledge, and the inſolence of power.

Suppoſe, in our times, an inconſiderable number of men, chiefly illiterate, ſhould diſperſe into the different quarters of the world, and declare that a divine perſon had appeared in a remote province; that he had inſtituted a new religion,

religion, and confirmed the truth of his miſſion by miracles, could we hope or imagine that theſe declarations alone would have power to break through eſtabliſhed ſyſtems? Could we then expect that whole ſtates and nations ſhould give up their tutelary Gods, with whom they had ſuch intereſting connections, and to whom they were ſo faithfully attached, for the tales of *babblers*, and *ſetters forth of ſtrange gods?* Could it be ſuppoſed that the bigotted Athenians, who baniſhed a citizen for declaring that the ſtatue of MINERVA was no living Deity, but the work of Phidias *,—who could condemn the brave ALCIBIADES for defacing the ſtatue of MERCURY—who could put to death the di-

* Diog. Laert. Lib. ii.

vine

vine SOCRATES for ſpeaking againſt the incredible fables of SATURN and JUPITER*—Was it, I ſay, to be ſuppoſed that any of theſe Athenians ſhould become converts to the preaching of St. PAUL?—Yet, behold, ſeveral of them do become converts to his preaching; and one, even of the *Areopagus*, that court, whoſe bigotted principles had formerly baniſhed STILPO, and condemned SOCRATES, now acknowledges the truth of the Chriſtian religion.—Paul, indeed, was not an illiterate preacher: He was *an eloquent man, and mighty in the ſcriptures*; but ſurely, without the co-operating power of God, he would have preached in vain to the Areopagus of Athens, even whilſt he quoted their poet

* Plato. Eutrypho.

Menander

Menander to prove that the God of nature was one univerſally exiſtent and intelligent Being.

But allowing, what ſeems hardly credible, that Paul might make converts at Athens, as well as in other places, by the power of his eloquence; did the reſt of the apoſtles owe their ſucceſs to the ſame means? What eloquence could there be amongſt illiterate fiſhermen, carpenters, and officers of the cuſtoms? Yet theſe were all ſucceſsful in their miniſtry, and converted thouſands to the faith of Chriſt—They, indeed, received the gift of tongues from the effuſion of the ſpirit; but did they, at the ſame time, receive the gift of eloquence, the various powers of perſuaſion, and the art of addreſſing the paſſions? It is

plain

plain from thoſe compoſitions they have left us, that they did not; nor was it neceſſary, while the hand of God was with them, and their doctrines were confirmed by the concurring teſtimony of miracles.

Hence then the argument, that without theſe miraculous powers, and without this divine concurrence no new religion could have been eſtabliſhed, by an inconſiderable number of men, ſo extenſively, and ſo effectually, as Chriſtianity was by the apoſtles.

But it is not ſo much from their ſucceſs in propagating the religion of Chriſt that I mean to derive any arguments in favour of the truth of it, as from their own particular views and private convictions.

It

It is not to be imagined that any ſet of men, however ignorant, ſhould be prevailed upon to undertake a taſk apparently dangerous and difficult, that was attended with no hopes, or proſpects of advantage.

The queſtion, then, will be——what were the views of the apoſtles in labouring to propagate the religion of Jeſus, and to eſtabliſh doctrines which had brought their author to a painful and diſgraceful death?

Could it be from the proſpect of any temporal advantage, that they perſiſted in performing the commands of their executed Lord? Could they hope, from ſuch a ſcheme, to enjoy the affluence of wealth, or the pleaſures of luxury?——

No—for they *wandered about in ſolitary places of the wilderneſs; hungry and thirſty, their ſouls fainted in them*—they were *in tribulation and diſtreſs; in famine and nakedneſs; in wearineſs and painfulneſs*—always without the conveniences, and often without the neceſſaries of life.

Could it then be with any ambitious view? Did they hope for fame or glory from men? Neither could that poſſibly be the caſe, ſince their maſter himſelf had previouſly informed them, that, *for his name's ſake*, they ſhould ſuffer all manner of evils.—Contempt and poverty, and pain and death. This prophecy they found moſt dreadfully verified—for they were ſubjected to *cruel mockings and ſcourgings*—they were *ſpitefully intreated and impriſoned*—their life was

was perſecution, and their death was torture.

Hence might the Apoſtle reaſonably exclaim, that if in *this life only*, they had hope in Chriſt, *they were*, of all men, the moſt miſerable.

But, behold now the true cauſe of their perſeverance! Their hopes were by no means confined to this life; nor, indeed, was there any object in it that ſeemed to merit their attention. Their expectations ſtretched beyond the limits of this world, to lay hold on that *exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, which he had promiſed, who could not deceive. This glorious promiſe was confirmed to their hopes by circumſtances of which they had themſelves been eye-witneſſes,

witneſſes, even the miraculous circumſtances of their maſter's life and reſurrection.

Behold here the fallacy of that argument, that the diſciples of Jeſus might from the connections of friendſhip alone, give a falſe teſtimony to his miracles, and to all the other divine indications of his miſſion! What! can the connections of friendſhip, of departed friendſhip, prevail over the fear of pain and puniſhment, of diſgrace and death? Could the apoſtles, if they had looked upon their Lord as an impoſtor, and themſelves as inſtrumental in extending a falſely acquired reputation; could they, I ſay, have been contented, for ſuch a vile, and, to them, unprofitable purpoſe,

to

to undergo the laſt extremities of diſtreſs? Can any thing be more abſurd than even ſuch a ſuppoſition?

The diſciples of Jeſus were well convinced of the divine miſſion of their maſter; and, for this cauſe, through all their ſufferings, they fainted not. For this they were content to follow the fortunes of him that was *deſpiſed, and rejected of men.* Hence, though *troubled on every ſide, they were not diſtreſſed.* They were *perplexed, but not in deſpair; perſecuted, but not forſaken; caſt down, but not deſtroyed.*

They knew that, if their *earthly tabernacle were diſſolved,* they had a *building of God, an houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

With ſuch glorious, ſuch well confirmed hopes as theſe, we can no longer wonder that *they endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame:* For, what were the ſufferings of a tranſient life compared with the object of ſuch hopes as theſe? Of what conſequence was it that they were *brought before rulers and kings for his name's ſake*, who was gone before them *to prepare a place*, a manſion of everlaſting felicity amongſt the allotments of the bleſſed?

Should it be aſked why the Almighty Redeemer ſuffered his ſervants to encounter ſuch difficulties, and to languiſh in ſuch diſtreſs—why he did not make the ſubject world acknowledge his Divinity, and embrace his precepts—that may be eaſily accounted for.

It

It is well known, and rightly concluded, from the whole œconomy of Providence, that the divine agency interferes not *generally* with the human will. —Thus, though, in ſome circumſtances, the immediate power of God might bring over a convert to the Chriſtian faith, which probably was the caſe with DIONYSIUS the *Areopagite*, yet the world in general was left at liberty to exert thoſe acts of faith, which were numbered in the ſyſtem of Chriſtian virtues.

Had theſe exerciſes been involuntary, they could no longer have had any merit; and to have compelled either the religious or the moral virtues of mankind, muſt have been inconſiſtent with the purpoſe of the ſupreme government, which is to leave man a moral agent.

But why, it may be aſked, did God appoint the low, and illiterate part of mankind, to bear the *glad tidings* of that redemption which his goodneſs provided us, and his wiſdom planned?—Why—but to leave to their own efficacy truths that were thus ſimply conveyed, and to render the faith of men more meritorious, more their own free and unforced aſſent, when their reaſon was appealed to by the truth of facts, while their paſſions were not ſolicited by the powers of eloquence.—This, moreover, might ſerve as a check to the inſolence of human wiſdom, which at that time, as well as in our own, was ready to exalt itſelf *above all that is called God.*

Should it be objected that the vulgar are eaſily impoſed on, that they might be induced

induced to believe the reality of falſe miracles, or be excited to bear the greateſt extremities, through the confidence of enthuſiaſm —— That objection will ſoon be refuted, becauſe ſome of the apoſtles had the advantage of human learning.

The converſion of the perſecuting Saul, might alone be ſufficient to ſilence every objection againſt the truth of Chriſtianity. Whether we conſider him as a Phariſee only, and conſequently full of the impracticable prejudice of his ſect, or particularly as an enemy to the Chriſtian cauſe, and making a merit of dragging to death, or impriſonment, it's poor deſpiſed profeſſors, the concluſion muſt ever produce in us the utmoſt aſtoniſhment, —to ſee this furious zealot join

the ſect he was determined to deſtroy!—to ſee him relinquiſh the hopes of preferment, and of fame, to eſpouſe the cauſe of a few deſpicable, dejected Nazarenes!—Was not here manifeſtly the interpoſition of Providence? Could any but a ſupernatural power have wrought ſo ſtrange an effect?

Obedient to the divine impulſe, this haughty Phariſee ſubmitted himſelf to the inſtruction of thoſe apoſtles that were ſo lately the objects of his perſecution and his ſcorn.

Perhaps he knew not then the diſtreſſes he muſt endure in the ſervice of his Redeemer—he knew not that he muſt be abandoned to the cruelty of perſecution, the ſport of inſolence, and the rage of tyranny

tyranny—yet, when he had experienced theſe, he reaſonably concludes that they were to be borne for the expectations of a glorious eternity.

If our hopes in Chriſt, ſays he, ſhould periſh with this life—if, when we had ſuffered every circumſtance of diſtreſs, the invention of cruelty, or the conſequence of want, our miſeries and exiſtence ſhould have the ſame period, *we*, of all men, ſhould be moſt miſerable.

But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. His words, *which cannot paſs away*, his eternal promiſes ſhall ſupport us under all the conflicts which nature would behold with horror, or the fears of mortality would avoid.

Hence, continues he, in the language of triumph, *I am perſuaded that neither death, nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature ſhall* be able to *ſeparate us from the love of God, which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.*

SERMON XIX.

The Folly and Miſery of Wickedneſs.

ISA. lvii. 21.

There is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked.

REASON is not the only guide that, excluſive of revelation, is appointed us for our conduct. The feelings of the heart are ſo many powerful monitors that continually ſuggeſt to

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us what we ought to do. The diſquiet that attends the purſuit of wickedneſs plainly points out the neceſſity of a different conduct, and the heart is, in this caſe, appealed to by the moſt ſignificant of all arguments, the attainment of its own happineſs.

But how weak are all the motives, and how inactive the principles of natural religion! The ſenſe of right and wrong places, indeed, our duty before us, but by no means affords us the power of purſuing it; and even the miſeries of a mind that is enſlaved by vice are generally inſufficient to reclaim it.

It may not, however, be inexpedient to expatiate on that wretchedneſs which

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is the portion of guilt; ſince, though the guilty may be but little affected by a repreſentation of their own unhappy ſtate, the innocent may, at leaſt, be encouraged to hold faſt their integrity, when they behold the diſtreſſes that are inſeparable from wickedneſs.

That conſciouſneſs of its own immortality, which is implanted in every human mind, unavoidably leads it forward to the contemplation of futurity. On the reflections, which this contemplation produces, depends much of our pleaſure or pain. The good man, from a ſenſe of the divine favour, cannot conſider it without ſatisfaction and hope; the wicked, from a contrary conviction, cannot think of it without miſery.

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He whoſe hopes are not in God, who has lived in idle negligence, or in open violation of his laws, muſt, for the ſame reaſon that makes the good man rejoice, dread the events of life and death. When he calmly reflects, (and reflection will ſometimes interfere) he can find nothing in his paſt life that can recommend him to the favour of that Power, who delights in goodneſs, and is a rewarder of the juſt.—Deprived then of that favour, what ſhall he do? or how ſhall he look forward to the diſmal proſpect that lies before him? How ſhall he ſupport the thought of being excluded for ever from the preſence of that Being, who has promiſed eternal happineſs to his ſervants? Shall he be capable of entertaining ſuch a thought without terror and anguiſh?

Miſerable

Miſerable is the condition of wickedneſs even in this life. Gaiety and diſſipation may occaſionally baniſh thought, and produce ſome intervals of eaſe or mirth, but the flighty ſcene will quickly diſappear, and remorſe and diſtraction renew their aſſaults. The voice of flattery may for a while ſooth the breaſt with falſe hope, and paint delightful ſcenes and agreeable proſpects; but the amuſive dream will vaniſh in a moment, and *reaſon* and *reflection* condemn the folly of attention.

Happy, indeed, would it be, could the repeated attacks of theſe friendly monitors at length diſengage us from our miſerable attachments—at length perſuade us to ſeek our happineſs in the paths of religious peace: but ſuch is the obſtinacy

obſtinacy of depraved inclinations, that the vicious man, though he may feel the diſquietudes of conſcience, ſeldom liſtens to it's dictates, or takes the proper means to reconcile it to his conduct.

To divert it, indeed, means are generally conſulted, and expedients are ſought to ſooth it into reſt; but the ſlumbers of an unapproving conſcience never laſt long. A thouſand accidents concur to bring back reflection, and it is only ſuſpended to acquire the greater force. To what miſerable arts is the wicked man reduced in order to be reconciled to himſelf, and to ſtifle the efforts of that conviction, from which it is not in the power of the heart to ſet itſelf free! What a wretched expedient to return to the ſame practices his mind is now condemning,

demning, from whoſe tribunal he is labouring to eſcape!

Strange, indeed, is it that he who pretends merely to act from the ſuggeſtions of nature, and makes thoſe a plea for the indulgence of every inclination, ſhould not here liſten to the natural friend of his boſom, whoſe kind endeavours are exerted to reſcue him from ruin! Strange, that the habit of vice ſhould be ſo infatuating, as ſtill to keep its votaries attached to it, in ſpite of reaſon and of happineſs on the one hand, and the diſeaſes and diſquietudes it produces on the other!

For though the ſenſe of having forfeited the favour of that all powerful Being, on whom we depend, might alone be a ſufficient cauſe of wretchedneſs, yet

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that is far from being the whole portion of miſery that awaits the wicked.

The diſorders that the body derives from intemperance, the fear of being detected in vice, or villainy, and of ſuffering either in loſs of reputation, or of life; the vexations of frequent diſappointments, which, to thoſe whoſe only hopes are centered in this life, and who have no dependance on, or expectations from Providence, muſt be very many and very great; and numberleſs cauſes of diſſatisfaction beſide contribute to enlarge the woes of wickedneſs, and to take from the vicious man every proſpect of reſt.

Is this the portion of the guilty? Is this the life for which they forfeit heaven, and are theſe the delights and the plea-

ſures of ſin? Great God! can there be in creatures thou haſt endowed with the power of reflection ſuch folly as this? Doth not even the unreaſoning animal conſult, in the beſt manner he can, his own eaſe and happineſs? But man is induſtrious to deſtroy both. He refuſes the very means of peace and ſecurity, and purſues the obvious path to deſtruction and miſery.

What can thus infatuate the mind, and make it regardleſs of the dictates of conſcience and of reaſon?—of conſcience that would lead us into the way of ſalvation, and of reaſon that would point out the dangers we ſhould avoid.

Can we be ſo much wrapt up in preſent objects, ſo careleſs of the future, as to neglect that which the next moment

may refuſe us the power to perform, and the omiſſion of which, will be attended by the worſt of conſequences?

Can it be in the power of a world that hath deceived us as often as we have truſted it, to make us withdraw our hearts from, and forfeit our hopes to a better? Can we calmly meditate on the loſs of eternal happineſs, and purſue the paths of ſin with ſecurity of heart? No: the prophet obſerves that the wicked enjoy not even this ſecurity, that they never know the happineſs of a mind at eaſe, but are like the troubled ſea which cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt forth mire and dirt.

Aſtoniſhing it is that the tempeſt ſhould not at laſt make them weary, and deſirous of reſt in ſome quiet harbour!

bour! Can the fair ſcenes of peace have no attraction? can the pleaſing proſpects of happineſs fail to induce? Alas! they fail.——The eye refuſes to look upon them, or beholds them at beſt with careleſs indifference. The wicked, though they have no peace, ſeldom take the right method to procure it, but continue in thoſe very practices which already have deſtroyed their ſatisfaction. Is it that they are afraid of applying to an offended God for pardon? or is it that they have yet ſome favourite ſin which, in ſpite of all their miſery, they cannot part with, and which that they may preſerve they are content to riſque every hope of futurity?

Should we reaſon thus in the affairs of this life, we ſhould be deſervedly

marked for the moſt pitiable folly. Who would not forego a little preſent advantage for a large reverſion? Who would not ſuffer a little inconvenience to avoid diſtreſs or ruin? Is it not better that one member, nay that two, or three ſhould periſh, than that the whole body ſhould be deſtroyed?

What, then, remains but that the wicked forſake his way and the unrighteous man his path, and that he turn unto the Lord, who will have mercy upon him, and to God that will abundantly pardon?

If yet he hope to taſte of life without anguiſh, or to enjoy the light without bitterneſs of ſoul; if he would ſeek any ſerenity of mind, any peace of heart, while

while in this ſtate of being; let him not delay to apply to him, who alone can give reſt to the weary and the heavy-laden.

If he have any regard for the welfare of a future exiſtence, if any hope of paſſing an immortal life in happineſs, let him make uſe of the day, while it is called to-day, and, before the grave ſhall cloſe it's everlaſting doors upon him, let him ſeek by repentance what he has forfeited by vice.

Upon the whole, if we wiſh for peace or ſatisfaction in this life, let it be remembered that it is only to be found in the duties of religion.—Every other ſcheme will prove ineffectual—He who can have nothing to entitle him to the favour of

God, muſt be uneaſy with reſpect to his future ſituation; if, indeed, he believes in a future ſtate.—Should he affect to diſbelieve it, yet he cannot be happy, becauſe no man can, at all times, be an infidel. The voice of reaſon and of conſcience will occaſionally interfere, and will ſtagger the reſolution of the moſt determined obſtinacy.

A man may, perhaps, live an atheiſt, but no man ever died one. We give credit to the intereſts of this world no longer than it flatters us with pleaſure, or furniſhes us with amuſement; and when the proſpect of theſe ſhall vaniſh, reaſon will aſſert her ſlighted authority, and will ſuggeſt it to us to ſeek a refuge where, hitherto, we had been unaccuſtomed to place it.

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In theſe circumſtances, of what ſhall the wicked avail himſelf? What agonies muſt he feel, when the ſoul labours under fear and apprehenſion, while the body languiſhes in pain and ſickneſs? How will he blame his folly and preſumption, his obſtinacy and ingratitude, that have robbed him of the only hope that could ſupport him through the vale of death, or open any pleaſing proſpect to the allotments of eternity! How will he mourn over the ruins of his folly, when every ſenſe is loſt in terror and confuſion, and every reflection terminates in deſpair!

Such is the melancholy fate of the wicked, whoſe life is miſery, and whoſe death is diſtraction!

Let us, my friends, as we know these things, avail ourselves of the knowledge. Let us secure the favour of God, and life or death shall alike bring us happiness.

"Mark the perfect man, and behold "the upright, for the end of that man "is peace."

SERMON XX.

The Propriety of a reverent and attentive Deportment in the Houſe of God.

ECCLES. *v.* 1.

Keep thy foot when thou goeſt into the houſe of God, and be more ready to hear, than to offer the ſacrifice of fools; for they conſider not that they do evil.

HOW dreadful is this place! ſurely this is none other than the houſe of God, this is the gate of heaven—ſaid the raviſhed

raviſhed Patriarch, when he awoke from a viſion, in which he had beheld the divine Preſence. Nothing can be greater, or more ſolemn than this ejaculation. How awful, ſays he, is this wild and uncultivated deſert, where, deſtitute of domeſtic conveniences, I repoſed my head on a pillow of ſtones!—yet how venerable even is this place, ſince it hath been conſecrated by the appearance of the immortal God!

The ſenſe of the divine Preſence, either where the Almighty had diſcloſed himſelf in viſions to his ſervants, or in thoſe places of public worſhip, where he was ſuppoſed more immediately to be, was entertained by the patriarchs and the prophets of old, with the moſt reverential awe.

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The houſe of God was, moreover, their delight; and they knew no happineſs equal to that of having a free and frequent reſort to it: inſomuch that when the holy Pſalmiſt was under the greateſt perſonal diſtreſſes——when his children rebelled; when his friends deſerted, and his enemies reviled him, he felt no diſtreſs ſo deeply as his baniſhment from the houſe of God.

" My ſoul longeth, ſays he, yea even
" fainteth for the courts of the Lord:
" my heart and my fleſh cry out for the
" living God.

" O then ſend out thy light and thy
" truth, let them lead me, let them
" guide me unto thy holy hill, and to
" thy tabernacle!

" Then

" Then will I go unto the altar of
" God, unto God, my exceeding joy;
" yea upon the harp will I praiſe thee,
" O God! my God!"

There is a remarkable paſſage in the prophet Daniel, in which he implores heaven for the rebuilding of the fallen ſanctuary.

" Cauſe thy face to ſhine upon thy
" ſanctuary, that is deſolate.

" Thy ſervants take pleaſure in her
" ſtones, and favour the duſt thereof."

They revered the *very ruins* of what had once been the houſe of God; and *loved* even *the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of* Babylon.

Nothing,

Nothing, indeed, could be more magnificent than the ideas which the ancient people of God had of their places of worſhip. They believed that the divine Preſence was attended by multitudes of angels, and exalted beings, which, though inviſible, joined in the worſhip of the Almighty. Thus when *Agrippa* diſſuades the Jews from rebelling againſt the Romans, he calls to witneſs their holy temple, and the angels *.

But this opinion was not peculiar to the Jews only, it was received likewiſe by the Chriſtians, as appears from various paſſages in the writings of the Fathers †. And St. Paul has confirmed

* Joſeph. de Bell. Jud. lib. ii. c. 16.

† For this opinion, vid. Orig. cont. Celſ. lib. viii. p. 420.—Procop.—Chryſoſt. Hom. 36. in 1 Cor. et Hom. 24. in Act. Apoſt.—Baſil. Liturg. &c.

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the matter, where he obſerves that the women ought, in decency, to have their heads covered, *becauſe of the angels.* I might obſerve too, that a prelate near our own times, diſtinguiſhed for his evangelical piety, was of the ſame opinion *, did I not conſider this part of my ſubject rather as matter of curioſity than of uſe.

I. What I have here principally to inſiſt upon, is the propriety of a reverent and attentive deportment in the houſe of God.

There is ſomething ſo ſolemn, ſo great and affecting in the appearance of a congregation uniting in the worſhip of the almighty Providence, that one ſhould

* Bp. Taylor. Great Exemplar. p. 175.

think the awfulneſs of the ſcene itſelf might impreſs the mind with that religious veneration, which the nature of the duty, when conſidered, muſt inſpire.

But it appears that the duty itſelf ſtands in need of conſideration; and let us, therefore, conſider it as we ought. —In the firſt place, what is the occaſion of our aſſembling here? Do we come merely to meet our friends or acquaintance? Was it our errand to cenſure the dreſs or appearance of our neighbours? Or was it to exhibit our own perſons to the eye of public curioſity and reſpect? —Were theſe, or any of theſe the purpoſe of this aſſembly?—Every man, for himſelf, will anſwer in the negative.

But

But what then, I aſk, was the deſign of this meeting? The anſwer you would make, is obvious—The public worſhip of Almighty God:—this is a moſt important purpoſe indeed; the firſt and greateſt duty of a rational creature.—But, is it poſſible that what you tell us ſhould be the caſe? Is the Almighty to be worſhipped by levity and impertinence? Come you into his courts to indulge your curioſity, your malignity, or your indolence? Is this really the temple of God, or is it the temple of idleneſs?—where we may yet indulge *a little ſlumber, a little ſleep, a little folding of the arms!* Is this then a place of divine worſhip, or is it not rather ſacred to impertinent curioſity?—a place convenient for making cenſorious remarks, to gaze

about us with ſtupid impudence, and to ſit down contented if we ſee a foible in our neighbour.

If ſuch was our buſineſs, or if ſuch be our behaviour, we come, indeed, as the royal Preacher ſays, *to offer the ſacrifice of fools:* for nothing can be a more flagrant proof of folly, than to act contrary to all decency and propriety.—— And ſurely to bring the airs of levity and vanity, to come with a cenſorious, an indolent, or a trifling ſpirit, into a place ſet apart for divine worſhip, is not only in the laſt degree indecent and improper, but muſt be attended with no inferior degree of guilt.

II. For, in whoſe preſence is it that we thus behave? Is it before an earthly

prince?—No—In ſuch a caſe we ſhould be careful not to give offence by a trifling levity, or an idle inattention.—It is not in the courts of an earthly prince that we ſhould thus demean ourſelves;—but—it is in *the Lord's houſe, even in the courts of the houſe of our God*—it is in the preſence of that great, and ever adorable Being, whoſe eye is over all his works;—of that infinite, and amazing Power, at whoſe command theſe ſtupendous worlds were created—theſe worlds, *and all that moveth therein.*

In whoſe preſence is it, I ſay, that we thus behave? Is it only before mortal beings, creatures that are frail and dependent like ourſelves? No—if we aſſembled in the name, and for the worſhip

ſhip of God, that is not the caſe: for, has he not promiſed that *wherever two or three are gathered together in* his *name, there will* HE *be in the midſt of them.*

It is, therefore, confeſſedly, in the preſence of God himſelf that we aſſemble to worſhip him. Were it otherwiſe, what would our worſhip be? would not *that* too be *the ſacrifice of fools?* Were there no eye, no ear attentive to our devotions, would they not be abſurd? would they not be unworthy of a rational being?

But if, as we truſt, and as we know, there is a Power that attends both to our devotions, and to our whole conduct—if, as we may reaſonably believe, God is more particularly preſent in the

places of public worſhip,—ſhall we, on theſe moſt important occaſions, bring with us the foibles of our lighter moments? Shall we be idle or inattentive, cenſorious or impertinent? Believe me, negligence, mere negligence would here be raſhneſs, and levity would be the moſt audacious preſumption.

How reproachful muſt it appear to a Chriſtian congregation even to ſuppoſe that ſuch admonitions as theſe could be neceſſary! to an aſſembly of Pagans they would not have been ſo. "We "enter the temples of the gods," ſays one of their philoſophers *, "with the "utmoſt order and gravity; when we "approach to ſacrifice, we caſt our

* Sen. Nat. Quæſt. lib. vii. c. 30.

"eyes

" eyes downward, in token of ſubmiſ-
" ſion, and obſerve every other circum-
" ſtance that can be expreſſive of mo-
" deſty."—Another of their writers *, who bears the moſt reſpectable name in all the heathen antiquity, " would have " that perſon puniſhed with death who " ſhould offend in the public worſhip " of the Gods."

III. It is probable that the ancient Jews, from the great reverence they had for their temples and their worſhip, were not guilty of all thoſe follies during divine ſervice for which Chriſtians are now ſo juſtly reprehenſible. The principal fault that the preacher ſeems to charge them with is want of

* Plato de Legib. lib. x. ſub fin.

attention. *Be more ready to hear*, ſays he, *than to offer the ſacrifice of fools.* "When ye come into the houſe of "God for inſtruction, to hear his word "read, and explained, what means "your negligence and inattention? It "is not ſo much worth your while to "obſerve the ceremonial, as to learn "the moral part of the law: for God "*will have mercy* rather than *ſacrifice.* "*Be*, therefore, *more ready to hear.*"

Is it poſſible that we ſhould aſſemble for the public worſhip of God, and at the ſame time refuſe our attention either to his written word, to comments upon it, or to doctrines derived from it? Would not this be a ſpecies of mock-worſhip? Could we hope to pay our court to any earthly monarch, while we

we denied our attention to thoſe laws or cuſtoms, thoſe rules or manners which he had appointed his miniſters to lay before us? And yet during our preſence in the courts of God's houſe how very apt are we to be inattentive!—— inattentive, not only to the divine word, and to the illuſtration of that word, but to the very ſenſe and ſignification of thoſe prayers and praiſes, which we ſolemnly utter with our lips!

How often are our thoughts wandering, while our voices are lifted *up unto the Lord!* How many unmeaning ſentences!——how many expreſſions, of which we have no idea, do we *part with* in the ordinary courſe of our devotions! ——Yet ſurely theſe prayers ſhall aſcend in vain, and bring down no bleſ-

ſing on the head of him that uttereth them. While we are but the mere channel of words,——while our organs are made to convey expreſſions to which we affix no meaning, what do we make of ourſelves more than machines? Or, as St. Paul has it, what are we better than *ſounding braſs*, or than *tinkling cymbals?*

One ſhould think that the ſenſe of our native dignity, the dignity of a reaſonable being, might rouſe us from ſuch an unmanly, ſuch an irrational indolence. What! Has God given me theſe faculties of ſenſe and intelligence, theſe powers of conception and apprehenſion, and ſhall I degrade my reaſonable nature by uttering ſounds, like ſome mimic bird, which are attended with no meaning?

But

But—when I addreſs myſelf to that Being, who gave me this ſenſe, this power of reaſon and reflection—ſhall I *then* make no uſe of them? Shall the Giver of theſe good gifts be the only one in whoſe ſervice I neglect to employ them? Is it poſſible that I ſhould be ſo ſtupid, or ſo ungrateful?—Though nothing can be more to the purpoſe than ſuch enquiries as theſe, perhaps there are no enquiries whatever that are ſo ſeldom made: and this, I take it, is, in a great meaſure, owing to want of conſideration.

IV. *We conſider not that we do evil.* The human mind is ſo volatile and ſo various, and our thoughts are ſo accuſtomed to proceed from one object to another through the chain of ideas, that

it

it requires the ſtricteſt attention and reſolution to keep them fixed on the ſame ſubject for any conſiderable time. This I obſerve, not by way of excuſe or palliation of the faults I have already mentioned, but that when you know, or when you conſider, (for it could not be unknown to you) how apt the thoughts are to wander, you ſhould by a ſtricter attention, and a more zealous care, call them home to the duties of divine worſhip.

It is but a weak apology for a being that is capable of thought and reflection, to ſay that he was led into error by want of conſideration. For what purpoſe, think you, did God give us theſe faculties, but that we ſhould employ them in his ſervice? And ſhall they *then* lie dormant?

dormant? Shall they *then* only be more particularly uſeleſs when we profeſſedly meet to ſerve him?

When our thoughts ſhould be employed on his favours and on his mercies—when they ſhould offer up thoſe prayers, that ought to proceed both from the ſpirit and the underſtanding; or while they ſhould be meditating on the human duties, or the divine promiſes, as either may happen to be the ſubject of the preacher, ſhall they meanly return to their ſecular employments, and go, *ſome to their farm, and others to their merchandize.*

In one word, my friends, let us take the method of that prince who was well acquainted with the human heart, and knew

knew how to govern it; let us endeavour to *ſet God always before us.* Without this awakening ſenſe of the divine preſence, our aſſembling here will only be to *offer the ſacrifice of fools: our preaching will be vain, and your hearing will be vain alſo.*

SERMON XXI.

The religious and moral Neceſſity of charitable Contributions.

MATTH. XXV. 45.

Inaſmuch as ye did it not to one of the leaſt of theſe, ye did it not to me.

IF the laſt charge of heaven can affect us; if the final ſentence of the judge of the world deſerve our care; if it may concern us to know why God accepts, why he rejects his creatures, the import of theſe words ſhould be well weighed.

Our

Our Saviour, deſcribing the laſt judgment, has given us this account of the proceedings of that great day.

"When the Son of man, ſays he, "ſhall come in his glory, and all the "holy angels with him, then ſhall he "ſit upon the throne of his glory;

"And before him ſhall be gathered "all nations;

"And he ſhall ſeparate them one "from another, the good on his right "hand, and the wicked on his left.

"Then ſhall he ſay to thoſe on his "right hand; Come, ye bleſſed of my "Father, inherit the kingdom prepared "for you from the beginning of the "world."

And

And this is the cauſe why he pronounces them worthy of his acceptance:

"I was an hungered, ſays he, and "ye gave me meat; thirſty and ye gave "me drink; I was a ſtranger and ye "took me in; naked and ye clothed "me; I was ſick and ye viſited me; "in priſon and ye came unto me."

When the righteous ſhall diſown the remembrance of theſe kind offices, and modeſtly refuſe the acknowledgment to which they think themſelves not entitled —then ſhall he reply,

"Inaſmuch as ye have done it unto "one of the leaſt of theſe my brethren, "ye have done it unto me."

When

When the wicked ſtand arraigned for the neglect of thoſe duties which the righteous had diſcharged, the ſenſe of guilt leads them to ſeek an evaſion in the ſame anſwer which the candour of the juſt made uſe of to diſclaim a merit they could not apply.

For, "when, ſay they, ſaw we thee an "hungered and fed thee not, or thirſty "and gave thee no drink? When ſaw "we thee a ſtranger and took thee not "in, or naked and clothed thee not? "Sick, or in priſon, and viſited thee "not?"

Then ſhall he anſwer,——

"Inaſmuch as ye did it not to one "of the leaſt of theſe, ye did it not "to me."

In

In the progreſs of this diſcourſe, I ſhall conſider,

I. The nature and objects of charity, as deſcribed by our Saviour.

II. The moral reaſonableneſs of that duty.

III. The abſolute neceſſity of it; in compliance with the divine commands; and,

IV. Draw ſuch reflections from the whole as may beſt excite us to the due diſcharge of it.

I. I am to conſider the nature and objects of charity, as deſcribed by our Saviour. Charity is not, nor ought to be, confined to any ſect or party of men.

When the judge of the world, addreſſing himſelf to the righteous, ſays, *Inaſmuch as ye have done it to one of the leaſt of theſe my brethren,* all nations are before him, and are univerſally included in that title.

The particular objects, mentioned in the context, are the hungry and thirſty, the ſtranger and the naked, the ſick and the priſoner.

Though all the circumſtances of human miſery and misfortune are not here enumerated, they are, moſt of them, implied.

Thoſe conveniencies which fortune can ſupply will find their proper objects in the hungry and the naked; and none

are more entitled to the kind offices of humanity than the ſick and the priſoner.

They who through misfortunes, or the various diſadvantages of life, are become deſtitute of the common neceſſaries of nature, are certainly entitled to the aſſiſtance of thoſe, who, perhaps, have been enriched by the ſame inconſtant hand of chance that has reduced theſe to depend on their relief; if it be proper to call that the hand of chance, which may, poſſibly, in ſome caſes, be nothing elſe but the wiſe diſpenſation of Providence, that places theſe objects before us for the exerciſe of virtue.

Shall I then ſee my brother in diſtreſs without giving him that aſſiſtance which heaven has placed in my power? How

ſhall I hope for the continued bounty and bleſſing of God, if I deal not my bread to the hungry? How ſhall I claim the merits of my Redeemer's mediation, a charity which muſt be extended to me, if I neglect his moſt material precepts, and refuſe my raiment to defend the naked? The hungry and the naked are the work of his hands, and have an equal right to human conveniencies with myſelf.

Thoſe who are in ſickneſs and pain, who cannot taſte the pleaſures of life for anguiſh, who have their bed in darkneſs, and their pillow on the thorn, are real objects of pity and conſolation.

To viſit the ſick, and to give them the little comfort we can adminiſter, is an

an indiſpenſible duty; and though the kind offers of condoling pity be unable to ſtay the feeble knees, or ſupport the drooping head——yet is it not entirely uſeleſs; for, beſides that in offering our compaſſion, we diſcharge a duty incumbent on humanity, it is not altogether vain with reſpect to the object. The wretched, though incapable of the pleaſures of ſociety, are pleaſed to find themſelves not neglected in their miſery; and it is ſome alleviation to pain, to find an ear that will attend to, and a heart that will pity it's complaints.

The unhappy objects who have loſt both their liberty and their fortunes, who, after encountering the accidents of buſineſs, and the difficulties of poverty, at laſt find a retreat in the ſolitary horrors of a priſon, and are *faſt bound in*

miſery and iron, are indeed pitiable, for their condition is wretched. To viſit and relieve theſe unhappy creatures is a charity truly meritorious.

To be excluded the ſociety of mankind, not to mention the want of comfortable conveniencies, is a ſad condition of being, and in itſelf ſufficiently miſerable.

Contrary to the condition of the priſoner, but not much inferior in diſtreſs, is that of him to whom our judge gives the name of a ſtranger.

" I was a ſtranger, and ye took me " not in."

Under this denomination are included all who have no immediate reſidence in life; who *wander up and down in ſolitary places*,

places, and have found no city to dwell in. To lend theſe an occaſional defence from the inclemency of cold, and the pain of hunger; to help the weary on their way; to be *given to hoſpitality*, and to *entertain ſtrangers*, is not ſurely too great a taſk for Chriſtian humanity.

Such is the nature, and ſuch are the objects of charity mentioned by our Saviour.

Give me leave, in the next place, to conſider the moral reaſonableneſs of that duty.

II. No man is made for himſelf, but for the whole. Every individual is as a link in the great chain of ſociety, where all are knit together, and mutually dependent. The animating and connecting

principle is ſelf-love, which ſeeks it's own good in that of it's fellow-creatures. If this principle be wrong directed; if we, through a falſe concluſion, refuſe to aſſiſt any member of our ſpecies whoſe neceſſities demand relief, we neglect the import of moral rectitude and the fitneſs of things, as well as break through the ſtrongeſt bond of community, which is mutual ſupport. But the reaſonableneſs of charity needs not to be proved by abſtracted ſpeculations, it's intrinſic excellence ſufficiently recommends it.

" To contribute freely to worthy and
" charitable deſigns is a great and in-
" fallible argument of a benevolent
" mind: A mind that has honourable
" thoughts of Providence; that relies
" upon it; and is ſecure and unconcern-
" ed about the events of this life.

" Such

" Such a perſon ſeems to underſtand " the true uſe of this world, and to have " no more than a juſt value for it. He " will not be governed and made a ſlave " by his fortune, but is reſolved to make " uſe of it for the purpoſes to which it " was given, and chuſes rather to live " charitably than to die rich.

" He that forgets not to do good, and " communicate, gives us a fair aſſurance " that his *converſation is in heaven*; that " he has made a higher choice, and is " in purſuit of nobler objects than are " to be met with here; for, if he had " no further aim than the views of tem- " poral happineſs, if his thoughts were " only confined to this world, we ſhould " have reaſon to believe, that he would " not part ſo freely with it."

There

There is no ſtronger proof of the internal excellence of charity, than that admiration it infallibly draws after it, when it appears in low and unwealthy characters.—When the abilities of the giver are ſmall! when he has nothing to depend on but what the hand of labour has procured him, and lives ſucceſſively by the induſtry of the day!

" When, as St. Paul teſtifies of the
" Macedonians, men are willing not
" only to their power, but beyond it,
" and, like the widow in the goſpel,
" caſt, as it were, their whole living
" into the treaſury of the poor, this is
" an undeniable, and a glorious evi-
" dence of the benevolence and devo-
" tion of their temper, that they have a
" worthy apprehenſion of God, and are
" gene-

" generouſly inclined towards their fel-
" low-creatures."

Beſides the moral neceſſity and excellence of charity, the reaſonableneſs of it is probable in that it is conſiſtent with the dignity of human nature.

It is a *god-like* thing to relieve the neceſſities of the wretched, and to imitate the nobleſt attribute of heaven in ſupporting the poor and defenceleſs.

" The charitable perſon, when his
" fortune bears any proportion to the
" largeneſs of his mind, is the great and
" univerſal remedy againſt the calamities
" of life: He is a father to the father-
" leſs, eyes to the blind, and feet to the
" lame; he is liberty to the captive; and,
" if

" if not health, yet eaſe and refreſh-
" ment to the ſick."

To dry the tears of want, and to ſooth the anguiſh of pain; to chear deſponding grief, and to make the mind of neceſſity eaſy, and reſigned, muſt be the higheſt rational ſatisfaction that the mind of man can be capable of.

" What a heavenly pleaſure is con-
" ceived in beholding a poor object
" tranſported with joy on receiving a
" liberal alms from the hand, or refreſh-
" ment from the table of another! How
" delightful is it to abate, if not extin-
" guiſh the miſery of one of our own
" ſpecies, and to communicate pleaſure
" at ſo cheap a rate! To have the con-
" ſcious ſatisfaction, and aſſurance, that

" our

" our minds are generous and humane,
" that the ſoul is untainted by covetouſ-
" neſs, and envy, and conſequently free
" from the diſturbance of thoſe deteſt-
" able paſſions, gives both dignity and
" happineſs to human nature."

By this we have the ſublime liberty to conclude that we are, in ſome meaſure, of a temper reſembling that of the Author of our being, and that we ſhall meet his approbation in the rewards of immortality.

SERMON XXII.

The religious and moral Neceſſity of charitable Contributions.

MATTH. XXV. 45.

Inaſmuch as ye did it not to one of the leaſt of theſe, ye did it not to me.

THE nature and objects of charity, as deſcribed by our Saviour, and the reaſonableneſs of that duty, upon moral principles, having been already conſidered, I ſhall now proceed to ſhew,

III. The abſolute neceſſity of it, in compliance with the divine commands.

The

The eternal Providence, wiſe in all his diſpenſations, and leaving over all his works a wide field for the practice of moral virtue, has permitted a variety of circumſtances and conditions in human life, as well for that neceſſary ſubordination in the government of ſociety, as to lay open the virtue of reſignation to the poor, and that of beneficence to the wealthy.

As a great part of moral virtue conſiſts in this beneficence, man would have had little to do as a ſocial creature, had an equality of conditions rendered charity unneceſſary.

But then it muſt be remembered, that as providence has rendered this virtue univerſally practicable, he has likewiſe made

made the practice of it an indiſpenſible duty.—Conſiſtently with his unerring wiſdom and benevolence, he has not left the ſupport of the poor to the voluntary exertion of a virtue, founded only on choice, or on natural principles; but has expreſsly charged *the rich in this world* that they ſhould be *ready to diſtribute*, and *willing to communicate*.

It is indeed, an honourable commiſſion that they have from the Almighty, to *give his houſhold their portion of meat*; but they ſhould reflect that as the truſt is honourable and weighty, they ought to perform it with a proportionable fidelity, and that *it is required in a ſteward that he be found faithful*.

Few;

Few, perhaps, of thoſe who enjoy the luxury of affluence can boaſt ſuperior merit; they ought not, therefore, to look upon themſelves as entitled to the comforts of plenty excluſive of their fellow-creatures, but to conſider that *the poor are the Lord's, and ſo is the earth, and the fulneſs thereof.*

This conſideration ought to have it's due effect, with regard to the duty of charity, were it enjoined by no particular commands in the ſacred writings. But ſcarce any author there, from the Founder of Chriſtianity, to the loweſt prophet or apoſtle, has left this duty unconſidered; ſcarce any but has given us ſome directions about the diſcharge of it, proved it's neceſſity, or diſplayed it's excellence.

Though the Chriſtian doctrine explains it better, and enjoins it more ſtrongly, yet was it not unknown in the Moſaic diſpenſation. So great was, even then, the reputation of charity, that the Jews made a parade of performing it and ſounded a trumpet to ſummon the poor to their alms.

This method, indeed, of relieving the neceſſitous, was not ſo much the conſequence of a charitable diſpoſition as of deſpicable vanity, and deſerved no other name; but it is, nevertheleſs, a ſufficient evidence how reputable and how honourable this virtue was accounted.

Nor does this only prove to us the credit of charity with reſpect to human opinion, as a virtue only morally good, excluſive

exclusive of any religious injunction: They knew it to be a duty enjoined by, and the discharge of it acceptable to God. Thus we hear the Pharisee, when enumerating his virtues, and making a merit of his piety, declaring that he gave *alms twice a week.*

That his prayer was rejected, and the wretched Publican preferred before him, is no argument that the virtue of charity was not acceptable. His was not charity but insolence, not humanity but pride. Nor is it a wonder that his address was not received by that Being who is the searcher of hearts, and who judges not from the action but from the principle.

If we conſult the hiſtory of our bleſſed Redeemer, we ſhall find him, on many occaſions, beſides this mentioned, deſcribing and enjoining the duty of charity; ſo frequently and ſo ſtrongly does he inculcate it that it may be called the very eſſence of Chriſtianity, and it's cardinal virtue: Nor can there be any impropriety in that aſſertion; for it is the ſum of religion, and may be rightly defined the love of God, and of our neighbour.

He who is deſtitute of this love, who acts not from this principle, whatever may be his pretenſions to religion, or virtue, wants the eſſence of both.

We have many deſcriptions of this duty both by the prophet and apoſtles, as

as well as by our Saviour, but the beſt deſcription is his life.

If we purſue him through the whole ſcene of his terreſtrial exiſtence, we ſhall find that to go about doing good was his invariable buſineſs. To comfort the afflicted, and to feed the hungry; to reſtore the ſick to health, and the blind to ſight; to make the deaf hear, the lame walk, and the dumb ſpeak, were the exerciſes he delighted in, and the continued actions of the day.

This was the life whoſe merits entitle us to heaven, and which is propoſed the pattern of our imitation.

Hence appears the abſolute neceſſity of Chriſtian charity; for ſhould we ne-

gleſt thoſe precepts which the captain of our ſalvation has ſo ſtrongly enjoined, how ſhall we hope for his favour! how ſhall we plead for acceptance by the merits of that life, whoſe example we have not profited by—which we thought not worth our imitation?

To add to the force of this argument, I might here quote the ſeveral texts of ſcripture wherein God has expreſly commanded the duty of charity. But what has already been ſaid will, I hope, be ſufficient to convince you as well of the nature and reaſonableneſs, as the abſolute neceſſity of it.

IV. I ſhall only now, therefore, draw ſuch reflections from the whole, as may beſt excite us to the due diſcharge of it.

As

As the great end of ſociety is mutual aſſiſtance and ſupport, if through iniquitous ſelfiſhneſs, we refuſe that aſſiſtance to others, which, in the poſſible chance of things, we ourſelves might have ſtood in need of, we tranſgreſs the laws of nature, and the dictates of reaſon.

The great maxim of moral life is "to "do to others as we would have others "do to us." But if we neglect the complaints of miſery which we could comfort, or the cries of diſtreſs we can poſſibly relieve; do we not reſiſt the voice of nature and of reaſon, ſuppoſing the injunctions of religion entirely out of the queſtion?

As man is formed for ſociety, he is naturally a benevolent Being, ready to

rejoice with them that rejoice, and *weep with them that weep*, kindly intereſts himſelf in the welfare, and wiſhes the proſperity of his fellow-creatures.—— That this is more particularly the genius of this nation, the many public charities eſtabliſhed within theſe few years ſufficiently teſtify. Theſe, let us hope, may cover a multitude of our national crimes.—Would to heaven there were not ſuch a multitude to cover!—Theſe are noble inſtances of that charming ſpirit of benevolence which is inſpired by virtue, by piety, and wiſdom!

Indeed, he who, in the midſt of luxury and affluence, can behold his fellow-creatures ready to periſh with want, deſerves not the name of a human being. What can juſtify the man who gives to a tribe

a tribe of uſeleſs domeſtics, or creatures that have no further end than to contribute to his amuſements, that bread which the laborious hind has procured him, while he, perhaps, through want of a ſufficiency of it, pines in weakneſs, or languiſhes to death.

What numbers of poor, whoſe induſtry is ineffectual, would the ſuperfluity of affluence ſupport!

How many are rendered incapable of labour by ſickneſs, or accidents, or the infirmity of age, who cannot be received into public hoſpitals, and who get, it is to be feared, little relief from public contributions!

How many ſtarve in unſeen ſolitudes, ſcattered up and down over wilds and

deſarts,

deſarts, where the hand of kindneſs was never extended, which the eye of benevolence never ſaw!

Though we are not obliged to imbitter life by conſtantly partaking of, or contemplating the miſeries of our ſpecies, yet it is our duty to hear the complaints of diſtreſs, and to relieve neceſſity on all poſſible occaſions.

We are aſſured that we are by ſuch means laying up for ourſelves infinite happineſs in a future exiſtence: For we are told, that *he who giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord.*

How ought the rich in this world to rejoice that they have it in their power to inveſt their poſſeſſions in the ſecurity of heaven! Can there be any greater

joy

joy to a rational creature than this, that he can make the frail fortunes of this life laſt beyond the grave?

This is effectually to lay up treaſure in a repoſitory free from the inroads of the robber, and the ruſt of time!

Riches thus applied are, indeed, a bleſſing, nor ſhall their poſſeſſors find, if thus they diſpoſe of them, any unhappy conſequences from that declaration, that it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The divine pleaſure which a benevolent mind enjoys in relieving the neceſſities of the wretched is, all other conſiderations apart, well worth the purchaſe. It is, as it were, a foretaſte

of

of that eternal joy which ſhall be the ſure reward of thoſe who have pity on the poor.

Since then nature and reaſon call upon us, ſince heaven and happineſs invite us, ſince all laws moral and divine oblige us, let us perform this duty with chearfulneſs and alacrity; for *God loveth a chearful giver.*

Let us willingly impart of the good things of this life to the poor and needy. *The Lord careth for them. Freely* we *have received,* let us *freely give.*

Let us lay out the wealth we have in thoſe uſes, for which only it is ſerviceable, in clothing the naked, and feeding the hungry!

Let

Let us not ſuppoſe that to be loſt which is given to the poor; it is lent unto the Lord, and he will repay it.

That we may never be inattentive to the complaints of the neceſſitous, and never unheard, when we implore the mercies of heaven, may the God of all truth and kindneſs grant.

SERMON XXIII.

The Happineſs of determined and conſcious Integrity.

Job xxvii. 6.

My righteouſneſs I hold faſt, and will not let it go; my heart ſhall not reproach me ſo long as I live.

"UNSTABLE as water, thou "ſhalt not excell," ſaid the dying Patriarch to one of his ſons; and the ſentiment was indeed, worthy of that wiſdom and prophetic knowledge which

which the eaſtern Sages were ſuppoſed to have been, in a particular manner, favoured with, upon the approach of death.

In matters that relate to the common conduct of life, to the progreſs of art and the acquiſition of knowledge, it is obvious both from reaſon and experience, that a wavering diſpoſition can never attain either to excellence or to happineſs.——With regard to religion, the concluſion is equally true. It is in vain for him who *putteth his hand to the plough, and looketh back*, to hope for the rewards of that induſtrious perſeverance, which, though it may, for a while, *go on it's way ſorrowing*, ſhall, at the laſt, return with joy, and *bring*

it's

it's ſheaves with it.—He only it is *who endureth to the end*, that ſhall be ſaved; ——he who, through all the trying changes of this life, like the Patriarch, will not *remove his integrity from him*, who holdeth faſt his righteouſneſs, *and will not let it go*;——he only it is who may hope for the ſublime and diſtinguiſhed rewards of immortality.

Agreeably to the doctrine of the prophet, if the righteous man forſaketh his righteouſneſs, and falleth into iniquity, *in his iniquity that he hath committed ſhall he die. In due time we ſhall reap, if we faint not*; but if we grow *weary in well-doing*; if we run not with patience and perſeverance *the race which is ſet before us*; if we retire with the ſlothful, and give

give up the proſpect of the promiſed land, becauſe the ſons of Anak are to be grappled with, we may expect that our portion will be appointed with thoſe who are finally accounted unprofitable ſervants.

The Chriſtian warfare is, indeed, by no means to be conſidered as a trivial avocation. The ſword and the ſhield muſt be graſped with unremitting vigilance; for many are the trials we muſt expect of our faith and patience, of our firmneſs and integrity,

The author of the text experienced theſe trials in a ſevere degree. His circumſtances were ſuch as make affliction always the moſt unwelcome: he had lived in dignity which no impertinence

could diſturb, in affluence above the apprehenſion of want, and in health and felicity uninterrupted by pain. His houſe was the reſort of peace and friendſhip; the voice of the tabret was heard in his dwellings; his flocks filled the mountains, and brought forth thouſands, and ten thouſands in his ſtreets; his table was clad with the riches of Arabia; and the incenſe of Sabea breathed on his altars.

Yet thus magnificently diſtinguiſhed, thus ſurrounded with luxurious abundance, he was never betrayed into licentious folly, or inflexible arrogance. He did not look upon riches as the evidence of ſuperior merit. He conſidered them as the gift of God, and forgot not to bleſs the hand of the giver. His charity

rity and beneficence were large and diffuſive in proportion to his circumſtances. He was *eyes to the blind*, and *feet* was he *to the lame*. His *words upheld thoſe that were falling*, and *he ſtrengthened the feeble knees*.

Such was the conduct of this happy and diſtinguiſhed eaſtern prince, when it drew upon him the envy of our common enemy, who, repreſented as converſing with God, would depreciate that integrity he could not corrupt. "For "doth Job," ſays he, "fear God for "nought? Haſt not thou made an hedge "about him, and about his houſe, and "about all that he hath on every ſide? "Thou haſt bleſt the work of his hands, "and his ſubſtance is increaſed in the "land. But put forth thine hand now,

" and touch all that he hath, and he will " curſe thee to thy face."

In this the deceiver was deceived: When the patriarch was told ſucceſſively that he was deprived of his ſons, his ſervants, and even all his poſſeſſions, he betrayed not one ſign of impious reſentment, or cenſorious diſcontent. " The " Lord gave," ſays he, " and the Lord " hath taken away; bleſſed be the name " of the Lord." When, to add to the diſtreſs of poverty and loſs of children, he was deprived of health too, and doomed, in all appearance, to languiſh out the miſerable remains of life in *ſickneſs* and in ſorrow, he makes the ſame pious concluſion,—" Shall we receive good at the " hand of God, and ſhall we not receive " evil?" When made to *poſſeſs months*

of

of vanity, and wearisome nights were appointed to him, still he possessed his soul in patience, and declares in the consciousness of determined integrity, "my "righteousness I hold fast, and will not "let it go; my heart shall not reproach "me so long as I live."

Such is the resolution, which considered in the most comprehensive sense of the words, should be formed by every christian, and attended to through the different circumstances of prosperity and adversity. For to hold fast our righteousness under the distresses of misfortune, or afflictions of whatever kind, does not perhaps require greater fortitude or attention, than are necessary in the luxury of affluence, or the carelessness of ease.

When life looks gay around us, when every appetite is ſummoned to enjoyment, and every ſenſe invited by it's object of gratification, we rarely give admittance to ſerious conſiderations. Every thought that might interrupt us in the purſuit of pleaſure is induſtriouſly avoided, and the delightful preſent robs the future of our care.

Like the traveller, who, charmed with the flowery proſpects that ſurround him, ſits down forgetful of his deſtination, we are apt to loſe ourſelves in the pleaſing ſcenes of this life, and, while we enjoy the manna, we neglect the promiſed land.

To continue inflexible to the importunity of the paſſions, and to reſiſt the ſolicitations

citations of vice, when ſhe bears before her the bewitching maſk of pleaſure, is a taſk to which we ſhould ſummon all our fortitude. If every avenue is not watched with the utmoſt attention, and defended with the ſtrongeſt guard, the vigilant enemy will have the advantage.

It would be ſuperfluous to urge the neceſſity of this care. If we look around us, what numbers ſhall we ſee who, overcome by the intoxication of ſenſual enjoyments, have fallen from their integrity!—irreſiſtibly borne away on the licentious tide of pleaſure, or amuſed with the dreams of deluſive vanity!

To retain our innocence in ſuch a general corruption, when the influence of example, and the tyranny of faſhion re-

concile us to the deformity of vice, and almoſt enforce compliance, requires no inferior degree of reſolution.

The world is ſtill ſo imperceptibly inſinuating itſelf into our eſteem, by a thouſand ſtratagems which we cannot be aware of, that no circumſpection can be too minute if we would ſtill hold faſt our righteouſneſs, and keep our virtue untainted.

However, to take an impartial eſtimate of the moſt flattering pleaſures that this life can afford,—"to diveſt the "gay phantom of temporal happineſs, "of that falſe luſtre and ornament in "which the pride, the paſſions, and the "follies of men have dreſt her up," would, perhaps, be the moſt effectual method

method to ſecure ourſelves againſt her charms. Compared with the purity of virtue, and the valuable conſideration of future happineſs, all ſecular delights will appear but as the duſt of the balance.

Thus neceſſary is the care of our righteouſneſs, ſo far as it includes the virtues of temperance and ſobriety, nor ought we to be leſs diligent in preſerving it untainted in it's other ſignifications, particularly as it implies moral juſtice.

To obſerve ſtrict equity in all our connections, ſincerity in our profeſſions, and humanity and moderation in every circumſtance of life, requires a conſtant guard over our paſſions, and an unremitting attention to the laws of rectitude.

Self-

Self-love is ſo very active and induſtrious in our ſervice, that unleſs we keep a conſtant eye upon her, and direct all her motions, ſhe will be imperceptibly encroaching on the properties of others.

Pride, which is likewiſe the gift of nature, and neceſſary as ſelf-love, of which every man is poſſeſſed in a greater or a leſs degree, if not diligently attended to, and kept within it's proper ſphere, will betray us into cenſorioufneſs, inſolence or cruelty.

Emulation, if not duly reſtrained, will in the conſequence be envy; and even humanity itſelf inſult with the kindneſs it confers.

Nothing is more true than that the heart may be deceived into vice by the appearance

appearance of virtue. Short ſighted creatures as we are, we can ſeldom foreſee to what bounds the moſt innocent purſuits, when indulged, may lead us; nor are we apprehenſive through what different directions a quality apparently good may tend to wickedneſs.—It is neceſſary, therefore, that we ſhould keep a ſtrict guard over our conduct, and over the habit of our minds; that we ſhould examine impartially the principles from which we act, and the tendency of the action; and that, under every circumſtance, we ſhould be cautious leſt the prevalence of private paſſions ſhould interfere with the practice of the ſocial duties.

The neceſſity of this minute attention muſt be obvious to every man who has made

made the leaſt acquaintance with his own heart, and who wiſhes that it may *not reproach him ſo long as he ſhall live.*

The laſt mentioned circumſtance is, indeed, of all others the moſt deſireable; for on the approbation of our own hearts depends all our quiet, all our happineſs in this world.

He whoſe heart will not bear witneſs to the integrity of his conduct, muſt never know what it is to be truly at eaſe. Should the endeavours he uſes to ſooth and ſilence the remonſtrances of his conſcience, unfortunately for him, prove ſucceſsful in that reſpect, yet he can never know that ſenſible, that home-felt pleaſure which is the inſeparable attendant of a heart that is pure.

Behold

Behold here the happineſs of virtue in the moſt eſſential reſpect! When the glories of that felicity of which this world gave a promiſe, vaniſh away; when temporal hopes are gone, and diſtreſs and misfortune make their irreſiſtible inroads, then it is that the conſcious mind, ſecure in itſelf, and perfectly reconciled to it's own reflections, affords a ſupport that is adequate to every tranſient evil.

This it was which ſuſtained the afflicted patriarch under the greateſt diſtreſſes that human nature could ſuffer. On this he always builds his repoſe, and refers for conſolation to the integrity of his heart. ——His cruel and ill-judging friends would have adviſed him to forego every ſentiment of that kind, and, in conſideration

ration of his afflictions, to have looked upon himſelf as the moſt abject of offenders. This advice might proceed from exceſs of piety, but it was certainly wrong,——for conſcience is an unerring guide, and the heart has always a right to that ſatisfaction, which it's own approbation can give.

I cannot here forbear to obſerve that there is, even now, a ſect of men who, in this reſpect, are not unlike to Job's friends.—I mean thoſe unhappy and deluded people called Methodiſts.

Theſe poor fanatics, who are, in general, profoundly ignorant, and who catch at ſome branch or part of a ſcriptural text, without being able to attend to the relation and meaning of the whole,

are

are for ever depreciating human virtue, and the merit of moral goodneſs:—hence they do the utmoſt prejudice to the cauſe of religion, which is certainly founded on moral principles, while they deprive the virtuous man of that conſcious happineſs, which the integrity of his heart might afford him. They intirely deſtroy one of the motives to a good life, which is the ſenſe of that pleaſure it may yield; and for ever inculcating the wretchedneſs of human nature and human virtue, they enlarge the empire of ſuperſtition by opening all the gloomy avenues of ſelf-abaſement and deſpair.

Thus, I ſay, theſe unhappy people reſemble the friends of Job, who wanted to deprive him of his only remaining conſolation, the conſciouſneſs of his in-

tegrity; but he wiſely anſwered them, "My righteouſneſs I hold faſt, and will "not let it go; my heart ſhall not re- "proach me ſo long as I live."

SERMON XXIV.

An Exhortation to Beneficence: occaſioned by the Biſhop of London's recommending the Subject to his Clergy.

Preached at St. John's, London, 1764.

GALAT. vi. 10.

Let us do good unto all men.

THIS is ſurely a precept of the laſt importance, ſince it comes recommended to us by every writer, whoſe pen was charged with the commandments of his God.

Alas! that the precept itſelf ſhould ever need to be ſo repeatedly enforced! that the beſt and moſt eſſential part of human virtue ſhould require to be enjoined by ſo many ſanctions, to be inculcated by ſo many tongues! while the moſt iniquitous ſelfiſhneſs lays hold on the heart, and depraves thoſe capacities which are derived from the eternal ſource of reaſon and benevolence!

What the Almighty originally intended man to be; the conduct that is ſuitable to the dignity of his nature, and the happineſs of his condition, we may learn from the character of that amiable and exalted perſon, who took upon him the charge of our ſalvation.

In him we behold eſſential goodneſs, and invariable benevolence—a heart for ever actuated by ſocial love, watching, with unwearied kindneſs, over the welfare of others, and promoting their happineſs, with the tendereſt aſſiduity.—*He went about*, ſays the evangelical writer, *doing good*. This was the continual employment of his life; with this view he viſited every town in Judea, and, for the ſpace of three ſucceſſive years, made it his buſineſs to relieve the ſufferings of mankind. Where he went, pain and ſickneſs and infirmity fled before him.—He was, literally, that ſun of righteouſneſs which aroſe with HEALING in his wings, and the effects of natural evil were, for a while, ſuſpended in that happy region which had the glory to give him birth.

The effects of natural evil were ſuſpended——nor was the divine benevolence leſs concerned to prevent, at the ſame time, the increaſe of moral evil. He ſeldom diſmiſſed the ſufferer, whom he had reſtored to health, without reminding him of his duty; and when he had made him whole, he bade him *ſin no more.*——Into whatever village he went, he not only *healed their ſick*, but *taught the people*; and pitied them, *as ſheep not having a ſhepherd.*

Without honour himſelf; without being diſtinguiſhed as a prophet in his own country, or amongſt his friends; his beneficence invidiouſly miſrepreſented, and his miracles aſcribed to the agency of devils,—under theſe circumſtances, ſo mortifying to human weakneſs,

neſs, he invariably perſevered in the exerciſe of kindneſs, and was not *weary in well doing*.

Behold him enter the cottage of humble poverty, to comfort an afflicted family, by reſtoring to their hopes ſome dear and valuable member! Behold the parent, in ſpeechleſs anguiſh, watching the laſt feeble looks of her departing child! Where is the man of Nazareth to change this heart-breaking ſcene? Where is he whoſe tenderneſs will comfort the parent; whoſe power can reſtore the child? He comes —the man of Nazareth approaches! his kind purpoſe is written in the benignity of his countenance—"Be comforted," ſaith he to the mourner, "thy child liveth."

See here, O Chriſtians! the author of your religion, the pattern of your conduct! Ye cannot, indeed, imitate him in his miraculous powers——but in the motives of his miracles it is yours to imitate him——it is yours to adopt and cultivate that benevolence which was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and comfort to the mourner.

Like your gracious maſter, you can viſit the ſick, *the fatherleſs and the widow in their affliction*, and, like him, you can feed the hungry.

Need you by any external motives be excited to diſtribute your bread to the hungry? Then turn your eyes upon your amiable Lord, and behold him induſtriouſly doing the ſame!

"Jeſus

"Jesus called his disciples unto him, "and said, I have compassion on the "multitude, because they continue "with me now three days, and have "nothing to eat: And I will not send "them away fasting, lest they faint in "the way."

That divine benevolence which brought salvation to the soul, was not regardless of the wants of the body. That compassion which pitied and repaired the ruins of our nature; which brought us out of a state of darkness and servility into the light and liberty of the children of God, that large compassion extended to the minutest necessities of life——Behold it here exerting itself in the support of a multitude that

wanted bread!——Here was no unneceſſary diſplay of a miracle. This multitude was in a deſart-place, and many of the people came from far: Probably too many of them were poor, and unable to buy themſelves bread in the neighbouring villages; for ſuch, in general, were the followers of Jeſus——It was charity, therefore, it was pure compaſſion that gave occaſion to this miracle; and here too we ought to cheriſh the motive, though we cannot imitate the effect.

In one reſpect, however, we may retain ſomething of the miracle; and (as in the caſe of the loaves and fiſhes) in diſtributing our poſſeſſions, we may find them increaſe. Poſſibly the increaſe

creaſe may not in this caſe, more than in the other, be immediately viſible; but upon the diſſolution of the laſt great multitude, we ſhall perceive, that what would not, originally, have filled one baſket, ſhall ſcarcely *then* be contained in ſeven.

To encourage a diſpoſition that ſhall produce ſuch an happy effect, let us contemplate our benevolent Maſter during the progreſs of this charitable miracle.

Poſſibly ſome ſuch ſentiments as theſe paſſed in his gracious mind upon that occaſion.

"Behold, in this lonely wilderneſs, "what a multitude of my brethren! "with

" with concern and affection do I look
" upon them; for *they* are the work
" of my Father's hand. He who
" made of one flesh all nations on the
" earth, meant them to be the aid and
" support of each other: To this end
" he ordained the law of religion to
" consist in mutual benevolence—But,
" alas! how neglected that law, which,
" indeed, it is now time for me to re-
" establish!

" How like unto sheep, not hav-
" ing a shepherd, is this poor and ig-
" norant multitude; that for a while
" forsaking a servile and precarious
" dependance on the wealthy, hath fol-
" lowed me, as poor as the poorest,
" into this barren and uncomfortable
" desart!

" From

"from their ignorance, indeed, I "have endeavoured to ſet them free, "and have *taught them many things*; "but the bread of life is not, alone, "ſufficient for them; they have now "been with me three days in the wil- "derneſs and have eaten nothing; and "I muſt not ſend them away hungry "leſt they faint by the way: My gra- "cious Father will readily grant me a "ſupernatural ſupply, and I ſhall have "the happineſs of diſpenſing his bounty "to his creatures."

Where is the cold heart that is not warmed to charity by a ſcene like this? where is the narrow ſpirit that is not enlarged by meditating on ſuch a ſubject? Where is the ſelfiſh wretch that can behold his Saviour feeding the hungry, and

and dare to omit ſo neceſſary a duty?—That Saviour, on whoſe mediation he depends for everlaſting happineſs, by whoſe kind interceſſion alone he muſt hope for the favour of God—will he dare to withhold his hand, when he calleth upon him to relieve his brethren?

It is aſtoniſhing that thoſe who profeſs to follow the principles and precepts of the goſpel, and call themſelves by the name of the Son of God, ſhould need a moment's exhortation to charity. Know they not that this is the moſt eſſential precept of the Chriſtian diſpenſation? Need they be informed that their Saviour, their Redeemer, the Judge of the world, has declared theſe to be the conditions of his accepting them at the laſt day, viz. that they ſhall freely have contributed

tributed to the relief of the neceſſitous? They need not to be informed; would to God they needed not to be exhorted! But true it is that, however reaſonable any duty may appear, or how ſtrongly ſoever it may be enforced by the divine laws, the human mind will frequently be inattentive to it, and leave it among the objects that are known and diſregarded.

Beneficence is in itſelf ſo noble a virtue, ſo diſtinguiſhed by its peculiar greatneſs, that one would think it impoſſible to conſider without embracing it, or to contemplate without making it our own.

Yet all amiable, all engaging as charity appears, inſtead of being admired as an angel, ſhe is avoided as a ſyren.

The

The reversions she promises are looked upon as flattering delusions, designed only to draw us into a present expence. We are not liberal enough to take her unportioned to our favour, and therefore we determine to depreciate her virtues. Her generosity we call profusion, and her benevolence weakness.

The cause of all this is the prepossession of the heart. Wealth is an object that brings present gratifications along with it; and how low, or how mean soever those gratifications may be, they prevail over the influence of greater, because distant hopes.

To overcome this false attachment, and mistaken choice, there is no better method than to reflect how vain and transi-

tranſitory is every temporal poſſeſſion! How ſoon the imagined charms of riches vaniſh away, and leave the owner convinced that the privilege of food and raiment is all that they can boaſt! How deluſive are thoſe pleaſures which fortune promiſes, and novelty for a while endears! and how certain that diſguſt and diſcontent, which attend the decline of a life whoſe only hopes repoſe on this world!

If truth could obtain admittance for ſuch reflections as theſe, and if the mind could be perſuaded to conſider things in this light, it might not, perhaps, be difficult to recommend to it better hopes and more perfect enjoyments.

He who ſhould be convinced of the inſufficiency of wealth to obtain any

laſting

laſting happineſs in this world, might not be diſpleaſed to find that it was poſſible to inveſt it in the ſecurity of another—He who had vainly wearied himſelf in the purſuit of fugitive enjoyments, might be gratified by diſcovering the means of that permanent happineſs which by experience he had found unattainable on earth.

Such are the proſpects which charity brings along with her, and ſuch is the happineſs which ſhe has the power to give.

He who hath contributed to feed the hungry, and to clothe the naked; who hath been a friend to the ſtranger, the ſick and the priſoner, hath a moral right to hope for an intereſt with that Saviour, who

who has declared that he would accept theſe offices as done to himſelf.

Involved in this intereſt are the moſt exalted and magnificent hopes! Proſpects that bring to ſight the regions of eternal felicity; ages that glide away in intellectual joy and love; where the faculties ſpread and bloom for ever; ſtretching forward to the excellence of ſuperior natures; unbroken by exerciſe, and unimpaired by time.

Theſe, theſe are hopes which it is in the power of Beneficence to give. O exalted virtue! O glorious power! which if we exerciſe it in this ſcene of imperfection, ſhall lead us hereafter to an *innumerable company of ſaints and angels*; where we ſhall experience a greater and

more perfect harmony of affections; where ſympathy ſhall be warm without weakneſs; and where the interchanges of love ſhall be more tender and more dear!

Does emulation warm us? Are we affected with a generous deſire of excellence? Behold it here! To be charitable is to make approaches towards the nature of God—to do good, is to act like him!

If it be impoſſible for human beings even to make approaches towards the divine nature; yet it muſt be their glory and their happineſs to reſemble, in diſpoſition, the angelic powers—to imitate thoſe exalted ſpirits, that leave their manſions of felicity to attend inferior creatures,

creatures, nor deem it unequivalent to the enjoyments of heaven to relieve the conflicts of ſuffering virtue, and to reſcue miſery from the horrors of deſpair.

Thoſe exalted ſpirits that rejoiced with the Father of everlaſting mercies, when the foundations of the earth were laid! —that ſung together for joy when, in kindneſs, he called forth this ſmiling creation, and appointed the ſun to run his race—that exulted at the riſing of the ſtar in Jacob, and proclaimed BENEVOLENCE to the inhabitants of the earth! —Thoſe diſtinguiſhed beings, as their gracious maſter has told us, actuated by the ſpirit of invariable kindneſs, rejoice upon the repentance of a ſinner; and many have believed, poſſibly, upon good foundations, that they frequently inter-

poſe their care for the preſervation and happineſs of the human race.

Led by the example of theſe glorious ſpirits, and obedient to the precepts of our God and our Redeemer, let us diligently embrace the Apoſtle's advice, and, as we have opportunity, do good unto all men.

Upon this occaſion, when our Sovereign and our Dioceſan have called upon us to exerciſe our beneficence in the relief of our poor brethren, let us not be inattentive to their benevolent exhortations, but exert thoſe abilities which God hath given us, in promoting the happineſs and comfort of his creatures.

A ſtate

A ſtate of indigence very frequently becomes the lot of man, and, many times, from misfortune more than from miſconduct. God only knows whether thoſe, who now enjoy a comfortable ſubſiſtence, may not, through ſome unforeſeen accident, become the objects of that charity which is this day ſolicited from them.

Let it not, then, be in vain that it is ſolicited; but let them do unto others, even as they would have others do unto them.

END of the SECOND VOLUME.

5 JY 61

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